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FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

IRAQ

PART 14

January to December 1960

CONFIDENTIAL

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FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING
IRAQ—PART 14

EQ 1011/1
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No. 1

IRAQ: ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1959

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received January 4)

SUMMARY

The Iraqi revolution proceeded on its zigzag course achieving neither political stability nor economic progress.

Political Situation (paragraphs 1-3)

Qasim early lost support of the Right wing; thereafter he depended for his political support at times on the Communists and at times on the nationalists, each of which in turn suffered political persecution. In August Qasim lost his chance of conciliating moderate opinion by condemning and executing certain leading nationalist officers and by endorsing the pro-Communist and anti-Egyptian line of the notorious President of the People's Court, Colonel Mahdawi. The ensuing period of uneasy calm ended with the Ba'athist attempt on Qasim's life on October 7. Thereafter security forces and civilian officials continued to keep order and to prevent the revival of Communist influence in the country, which earlier in the year had assumed alarming proportions; but on his emergence from hospital, Qasim once more showed a definite though possibly unintentional bias in favour of the Left.

Iraq's relations with the U.A.R. went from bad to worse and by the end of the year, Qasim was also at loggerheads with King Hussein and the Shah of Persia.

Economic Situation (paragraph 4)

Royalties from the Iraq Petroleum Co. continued to underpin the economy which was otherwise stagnant, the harvest having fallen by half as a result of an ineptly executed land reform and development schemes being at a temporary standstill.

Relations with Communist and Western Countries (paragraph 5)

Relations with the Communist countries who provided generous military, technical, economic and cultural aid were good, although *bloc* experts in Iraq were generally not popular. Anglo-Iraqi relations improved, and our various gestures towards Iraq have evidently been of value. British imports into Iraq continue at practically the same level as before the revolution.

Qasim (paragraphs 6-7)

Qasim remains an enigma, easily swayed, vain and perhaps unbalanced. Although his position is now shaky and his personal popularity diminished both inside and outside the army, he may still last some time. But it is unlikely that Iraq under his leadership can now achieve stability in the near future. The Communists are well placed meanwhile to improve their position so long as Qasim appears to rely on them. Nevertheless, although the immediate outlook is obscure many responsible Iraqis believe that eventually an independent, non-Communist Iraq will emerge.

(No. 1. Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
January 1, 1960.

The Iraqi revolution pursued its zigzag course through 1959, achieving neither political stability nor economic progress. Throughout the year the struggle for power between Communists and Nationalists continued and was not resolved at its close. Qasim floated uncertainly on top of the violently conflicting currents, inclining mostly to the Left but never committing himself wholly to it. At the end of the year he was still in power, but was straddling uncomfortably the widening chasm between Right and Left and had found no sure ground on which to rest. He had failed in the essential task of a successful revolutionary, to keep together the forces which had made the revolution.

2. At the beginning of the year the Government still included representatives of all the currents of opinion which had made the revolution, even the Ba'athists, although the Right wing were disillusioned and had already lost their faith in Qasim. In a few weeks they resigned and Qasim's political support from then on was confined to the moderate and extreme Left. The Mosul revolt, in which Nasser was clearly implicated, gave the Communists an advantage which they pressed hard, presumably in the hope that they could quickly achieve power and finally bring Qasim under their control. With the help of adherents and sympathisers in Qasim's entourage, they were able for a short period to terrorise the country to such a degree that security virtually broke down and Government officials and the security forces were no longer able to exercise effective control. But the Communists overplayed their hand. Popular revulsion against their methods of violence and torture became strong, but might not have been strong enough to check them in their course, if they had not succeeded in infiltrating the army to an extent which gave their opponents the chance to convince Qasim that they threatened his power. Qasim reacted sharply against this threat, and against the Communists' part in the Kirkuk disturbances and the revelations of conspiracy among the Communist-dominated unions. He purged the army of its most dangerous Communists, froze the Communist-dominated Popular Resistance Forces, reduced the most dangerous centres of Communist power in the Government departments and professional and trade associations and restored the authority of

the security forces and Government officials. By the middle of the year, he seemed to have a reasonably good chance of conciliating moderate opinion behind him and of resting his position on an army and police loyal to him and uncontaminated by political factions, and on the bulk of Iraqis, middle-class and peasants, who wanted neither Nasserism nor Communism but only peace and prosperity. The Communists recognised their mistake, drew in their horns and reverted to a more gradual policy of sapping the strength of their opponents and consolidating their base. But they had lost much.

3. This reasonably fair prospect was sharply reversed in the middle of August. Having received information, perhaps true, that his opponents were again plotting against him with Nasser's help, Qasim reacted by condemning and executing leading Nationalist officers who had been on the fringe of the Mosul plot and who were still popular in the army, throwing in for good measure the four members of the old régime condemned by the People's Court who had been Nuri's principal instruments against the Communists, and specifically endorsing the pro-Communist and anti-Egyptian line of Colonel Mahdawi, whose People's Court had been used by Qasim both as a means of attack against his internal and external enemies and as his chief instrument of political propaganda. Qasim thereby lost a wide measure of support both inside and outside the army and the rift between Right and Left grew so wide that it became doubtful whether Qasim could now bridge the gap. His relations with Nasser which had slightly improved, again sharply deteriorated and made internal stability even more difficult of achievement. A Bourguiba with the country behind him, could afford an internecine feud with Nasser. Qasim, trying to lead a country which, with all its traditions of independence and its powerful minorities, still felt itself part of the Arab nation, and only precariously maintaining his own power, could not. The National Democrats in Qasim's Government became progressively more unhappy in their position, but kept their places for fear that their resignation would redound only to the advantage of the Communists. A period of uneasy calm was ended by the attempt on the 7th of October on Qasim's life, followed by Qasim's two months in hospital, during which there was even less direction of the country's affairs from the top. But security

had greatly improved since the spring and the security forces and civil officials continued to keep order and to prevent the revival of Communist influence throughout the country. The renewed hopes that Qasim, after prolonged reflection in hospital and with the help of some sensible advice, would give the country a new lead towards a middle course, were dashed by his Press Conference on his departure from hospital, which, if it did not indicate a conscious swing to the Left, showed evidence of a violent if understandable reaction against the alleged Ba'athist attempt to kill him and of a renewed dependence on the Left for the maintenance of his position. At the same time, his feud with Nasser was extended to King Hussein and a new row developed with the Shah, whose nervousness over developments with Iraq had led him to press in a somewhat injudicious manner the doubtfully-based Iranian claims to a "Thalweg" boundary on the Shatt al Arab. At the end of the year, Qasim's evil genius, Mahdawi, had reopened the People's Court for the trial of the Ba'athists accused of the attempt on Qasim's life, and a flood of invective and abuse on Communist lines was directed against the imperialists and their agents, Nasser, the Shah and King Hussein.

4. The people of Iraq would have been more inclined to put up with political instability if economic conditions had been good. With the royalties from the Iraq Petroleum Company continuing to underpin the Iraqi economy, they could not be wholly bad, but the general lack of confidence, the chaotic conditions in the countryside in the early part of the year which, coupled with the inept execution of the land reform scheme, resulted in a 50 per cent. drop in the harvest, and the temporary stoppage of new development schemes, caused a setback to the economy from which peasants, labourers and business men all suffered.

5. Qasim's relations with the Communist countries remained good. They have done much for him. They have given him strong political support; they have given substantial military aid in a politically acceptable form by selling him large quantities of arms at cut rates; they have promised and are now beginning to give economic aid, principally for industrial development; they have provided numbers of experts to take the place of the Western, mainly British, experts dismissed after the revolution and they have offered many opportunities for training Iraqis in modern techniques. But they have

not become generally popular and there has been some reaction against them, both following the excesses of the Iraqi Communists and when, as was to be expected, those Iraqis who had dreamt of a forbidden paradise before the revolution, found by personal experience that the reality did not measure up to their dreams. At the same time the natural reaction against the West has somewhat diminished and the Iraqis have shown themselves by no means disinclined to accept the advantages which the West has offered them. Qasim's own suspicions of the Americans and ourselves seem, for the moment at least, to have diminished, although they are by no means entirely dissipated. Our offer of heavy arms has not been taken up (perhaps mainly on financial grounds) but has had its political effect, our cultural connexions have continued in some respects throughout the difficult period and are showing signs of further revival and British imports into Iraq have been maintained almost at the pre-revolutionary level in spite of the import restrictions in force for part of the year and the generally stagnant condition of the market. The long-term prospects for British trade, provided there is no political débâcle, should be good. Although the major issue between the Iraq Petroleum Company and the Iraq Government, that of relinquishment of the unexploited area of the concession, was not solved before the end of the year, relations between the company and the Government have improved and the Government seem to have acquired a more realistic view of their dependence on the company's operations.

6. Qasim is not an easy character to assess. He has an apparently sincere desire to improve the lot of the Iraqi people, even if he has little idea how to do it. He is often indecisive, weak, confused and naïve, but is capable of cunning, ruthlessness and cruelty in the interest, which seems paramount to him, of maintaining his own power. He is brave, but vain and susceptible to flattery and only too prone to believe that he has the constant affection of the mob and the special protection of the Almighty. He is easily influenced by the last man in. At times he has taken strong action to improve security and curb the Communists and through his Foreign Ministry propounds and goes some way towards carrying out a policy which, though with a Left bias, can be described as

basically neutral. But he has never withdrawn his favour from those who were responsible for torturing Nationalists and allows free rein to the dangerous demagogue, Mahdawi. He appears to suffer from a lack of mental balance which makes his actions often unpredictable. Though he is by no means so mad as Nasser makes out, he seems, at least temporarily, to have been affected by the shock of the attempt to kill him, and his recent speeches are notable for their confusion of content and lack of restraint.

7. Qasim's position is now shaky. He may last a long time. Apart from the Communists, to whom his retention of power is a decided advantage, there are probably many, at different levels of the population who, if they would not unduly mourn his disappearance, still passively accept his leadership, however weak they may think it, for fear of the consequences to themselves and the country of his elimination, from the lack of an obvious alternative, for fear that Nasser might succeed to the inheritance or because they are accustomed to accept without much question, and with a little pushing, to cheer whoever occupies the seat of power. Some are doubtless still personally loyal to the leader of the revolution, though their numbers seem to diminish daily. He is well guarded in the streets; but there can be no doubt that his position both inside and outside the army has seriously weakened and he has many enemies, some of whom may be expected to try and kill him and who, at the fourth attempt, may succeed. If Qasim lasts and continues to appear to favour the Left, the expected move towards a form of parliamentary democracy may give the Communists the opportunity they seek to build up their position, or may reveal that, in spite of bias at the top, the anti-Communists are right when they claim that they have nothing to fear from the Communists. However useful Qasim and the Communists are temporarily to each other, their interests may in the long run prove irreconcilable. But it is also conceivable that Qasim might come to believe that all except the Communists were his enemies and that he could only retain his position, if not his power, by finally putting himself wholly in the Communists' hands. If he were removed by force, it is to be hoped that the army would be able to maintain security and produce a strong anti-Communist to take over the leadership

of the country, but what would happen in such an event cannot be predicted. It is difficult now to be hopeful that Iraq under Qasim can in the near future achieve stability and the prospects of his own survival are uncertain. The immediate outlook is therefore obscure, but the anti-Communists are still confident and active and I find it difficult not to share to some extent the faith of many of the best elements in the country that an independent non-Communist Iraq will finally emerge.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Amman, Ankara, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Kuwait, Tehran, Tel Aviv, Washington, United Kingdom Delegation to NATO, Paris, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, New York, Karachi, the Political Office, Middle East Forces, Cyprus and Basra.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

Enclosure

Diary of Events, 1959

January

- 1 Polish-Iraqi Trade Agreement and Educational and Technical Assistance Agreement signed.
- 3 Chinese-Iraqi Economic Agreement signed.
- 4 Visit of a Parliamentary Delegation from the Federal German Republic.
- 5 Trial of Bahjat Attiyah, former Director-General of Security, began.
- 6 Iraqi Army Day.
- 8-12 Hungarian-Iraqi Trade Agreement signed. Visit of Herr Grotewohl, Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic.
- 12 Trial of Rafiq Tawfiq, former Director-General of Security, began.
- 18 ID. 2 million promised to Provisional Government of Algeria from Iraq's 1959 Budget.
- 24 Trial of Abdul Rahman Hamud al Samarra, former Commandant of Police.
- 24 Trial of Said Qazzaz, former Minister of the Interior, opened.

February

- Exchange visits between teachers and students from the United Arab Republic and Iran cancelled.
- 4 Bulgarian-Iraqi Trade Agreement and Scientific and Technical Co-operation Agreement ratified.
- Abdul Jabbar Fahmi (former Mutasarrif of Baghdad), Bahjat Attiyah and Said Qazzaz sentenced to death.
- 5 Colonel Abdul Salim Arif sentenced to death with recommendation for mercy.
- 7 The Prime Minister's third Cabinet formed after the resignation of six Nationalist Ministers.

February

- 9 Trial of Major-General Omar Ali, former Commander of No. 1 Division and Mutasarrif of Sulaimaniyah, opened.
- 14-17 Trial of Brigadier Wafiq Arif and Colonel Abdul Jabbar Yunis, former Commanders of No. 1 Brigade, opened.
- 16-21 First Conference of the Iraqi General Union of Students.
- 20 Trade Union Rally in Baghdad to celebrate the licensing of Trade Unions.
- 22 Clash at the United Arab Republic Embassy on the occasion of the United Arab Republic National Day.
- Feb. 28- Trial of Khalil Kenna, former Minister of Mar. 14 Finance and Education.

March

- 2 Prime Minister's speech to reserve officers announcing the formation of a Sixth Division.
- 6 Rally of Peace Partisans in Mosul.
- 8 First Conference of the Iraqi League for the Defence of Women's Rights.
- 8-9 Revolt in Mosul led by Colonel Abdul Wahhab Shawwaf, Commander of the Fifth Brigade.
- 11 Curfew lifted in Baghdad.
- 15-22 Trial of ex-Commandant of Baghdad Prison and three other prison officials accused of causing the Baghdad Prison "massacre" of 1953.
- 16 Soviet-Iraqi Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement signed in Moscow.
- 21 Tree Day, marking the climax of demonstrations of support for the Prime Minister after the Mosul Revolt.
- 23 Yugoslav-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed in Belgrade.
- 24 Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.
- 24-28 Trial of four Iraqi Air Force officers for complicity in the Mosul Revolt.
- 29 Resignation of Faiq al Samarra, Iraqi Ambassador to United Arab Republic.
- 30 Public execution of the four Air Force officers.

April

- 1 German Democratic Republic-Iraq Cultural Agreement signed in Baghdad.
- 2 Polish-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed in Warsaw.
- 4 Chinese-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed in Baghdad.
- 6 Major-General Omar Ali, Brigadier Wafiq Arif and ex-Commandant of Baghdad Prison sentenced to death. Abdul Jabbar Yunis and Khalil Kenna sentenced to two years and ten years' imprisonment respectively. Two prison officials sentenced to life imprisonment and one acquitted. Amnesty offered to members of Shammar tribe who returned to their homes and reported to the local authorities.
- 8 Bulgarian-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed in Baghdad. Disturbances on Wimpey's sites in Basra over labourers' claim for Id advances of pay.
- 10 Bulgarian-Iraqi Trade Agreement and Scientific and Technical Co-operation Agreement ratified.
- 11 Hungarian-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed in Baghdad.
- 14-15 Second Iraqi Peace Partisans' Congress (the first having been held in 1954). Further disturbances on Wimpey's sites in Basra.

April

- 15 First Iraqi Peasants' Conference.
- 16 Soviet-Iraqi Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement ratified.
- Repatriated members of the Barzani tribe arrived in Basra from the Soviet Union.
- 20-30 Trial of the Officer Commanding and 16 members of the Aqra Garrison. Six sentenced to death, ten imprisoned, one acquitted.
- 24 Rally in Baghdad to celebrate the Bandoeng principles and Afro-Asia solidarity.
- 29 Iraqi Communist Party Manifesto issued.
- 30 Prime Minister declared that there was no place for political parties during the present transitional period.

May

- 1 May Day declared an Iraqi public holiday. Elaborate trades union procession.
- 3 United Kingdom offered to sell arms to Iraq.
- 5 Soviet-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed. Trial of Lieut.-Colonel Hermez and 10 other officers accused of complicity in the Mosul Revolt opened.
- 12 The General Federation of Peasants' Association was licensed. Exhibition of Czechoslovak medical equipment opened. Communist campaign for participation in the Government.
- 13 Polish-Iraqi Commercial and Payments Agreement and Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation Agreements ratified.
- 14 Prime Minister announced that he would himself call for party activities when the time was ripe. National Democratic Party announced that it would cease political activity during the transitional period. Continued clashes between Kurdish tribes and Iraqi security forces.
- 21 Communist Party statement urging the continuation of National Democrat political activity. Indian Trade Fair opened by the Prime Minister.
- 23 Hungarian-Iraqi Trade Agreement ratified. Lieut.-Colonel Hermez and five of the officers tried with him sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 25 Curfew abolished throughout Iraq. French ships forbidden to use Iraqi ports.
- May 27- Colonel Khalil Ismail and eight other officers tried for complicity in the Mosul Revolt. Four sentenced to death, including Colonel Ismail, and five to life imprisonment.
- 28 Investigating magistrates reminded by Military Governor-General that persons could be detained for political crimes only with the sanction of the proper authority.
- 31 R.A.F. withdrawal from Habbaniyah completed.

June

- 1 United States-Iraqi Military Aid Agreements of 1954 and 1955 abrogated and the Eisenhower Doctrine repudiated. "People's Delegation" to Arab countries left Iraq after two days' delay, having been refused permission to visit Lebanon, Jordan and Sudan.
- 2 Roumanian-Iraqi Trade Agreement ratified.
- 8 R.A.F. withdrawal from Iraq completed (Basra and area).

June

- 10 Revision in landlords' favour of crop division under Agrarian Reform Law.
- 11 Amnesty allowing persons under forced residence to return to their homes.
- 11-12 Rally by the Federation of Democratic Youth in Baghdad and the provinces. Prime Minister's statement to the Federation of Democratic Youth that he would lay down principles of policy, leaving the "popular organisations" to deal with details only. Popular Resistance Forces instructed to take orders from police and army.
- 18 Communist procession in Baghdad to commemorate those killed in the Baghdad Prison "massacre" of 1953.
- Mid-June Series of speeches by Qasim emphasising that the army would keep out of politics. Iraq's withdrawal from the sterling area.
- 22-23 Prime Minister's offer of an amnesty to the Kurds who had been involved in clashes with authorities and fled the country, if they returned home.
- 25 National Unity Front Manifesto submitted to Prime Minister.
- 30 Brigadier Daoud Janabi, Officer Commanding No. 2 Division, relieved of his post.

July

- 3 Bulgarian-Iraqi Postal and Wireless Agreement signed.
- 5 Prime Minister's announcement that there would be no National Unity Front during the transitional period. Government Departments ordered to reinstate without question civil servants released from custody. Popular Resistance Forces' training suspended during the July 14 celebrations.
- 6 Prime Minister commuted all prison sentences nearing completion by 15 per cent. on the occasion of the July 14 celebrations.
- 8 North Vietnam-Iraqi Trade Agreement signed.
- 9-11 First Iraqi Trades Union Conference. Prime Minister invited to the Soviet Union. National newspapers, *al Fajr*, *al Jadid* and *Baghdad*, resumed publication.
- 13 Prime Minister's fourth Cabinet formed with four new Ministers, including Naziha Dulaimi as the first Iraqi woman Minister, following the abolition of the Development Board.
- 14-20 Celebration of the first anniversary of the 1958 Revolution.
- 14 Prime Minister's speech at the Military College announcing the resumption of political life on January 6, 1960. Riots in Kirkuk.
- Mid-July Clashes between Communists and Nationalists in Baghdad and surrounding areas.
- 21 Albanian-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed.
- 23 North Korean-Iraqi Trade Agreement signed.
- 27 Military Governor-General condemned the unauthorised activities of Committees for the Defence of the Republic in Government organisations.
- 28 Albanian-Iraqi Trade Agreement signed.
- 29 Popular Resistance Forces suspended from duty throughout Iraq and P.R.F. uniform banned. All firearms licences cancelled.

August

- College of Arts professors protest to President of Baghdad University against "Communist terror".
- 3 Trials began of Communists accused of murder during disturbances in mid-July. Offices of the Federation of Trades Unions closed. Continued reports of defections from popular organisations and disclaimers by these organisations of political activity.
- 5 United Kingdom-Iraqi cultural negotiations opened.
- Aug. 12- Trial of officers, including Brigadiers
- Sept. 7 Tabaqchali and Uqaili, former Commanders of No. 2 and No. 1 Divisions, and Colonel Rifaat al Haj Sirri, former D.M.I., for complicity in Mosul revolt.
- 13 Prime Minister spoke in defence of Colonel Mahdawi at the Reserve College.
- 17 Soviet-Iranian Atomic Energy Agreement signed at Moscow.
- 19 Five officers and one civilian of those tried with Lieutenant-Colonel Kashali sentenced to death. Kashali and three others imprisoned. Remainder acquitted.
- 25 Execution of five officers and one civilian sentenced on August 19.
- 28 Nationalist candidates win the Lawyers' Association elections.
- 30 Teachers and students held after minor incidents released.

September

- 2 Military Governor-General's directive to the Press ordering accuracy and moderation.
- 7 "United List" win Journalists' Union elections.
- 7-12 Turkish-Iraqi cultural talk in Ankara under the cultural protocol of the Treaty of Friendship.
- 12-19 Visit by parliamentary delegation from the Federal German Republic.
- 8 Mahmoud Jamil, a would-be witness at the Tabaqchali trial, shot at Beirut Airport.
- 16 Brigadier Tabaqchali and three of the officers tried with him sentenced to death. Four officers sentenced to life imprisonment. Brigadier Uqaili and the remainder acquitted. The first Iraqi Chargé d'Affaires leaves for Peking.
- 20 Iraqi Airports open all night. Public execution of Brigadier Tabaqchali and twelve other officers sentenced to death during the Mosul trials. Said Qazzaz, Abdul Jabbar Fahmi, Abdul Jabbar Ayoub (ex-Commandant of Baghdad Prison) and Bahjat Attiyah hanged.
- 21-26 First trial of persons accused of murder during the Kirkuk riots. One man sentenced to death, two to life imprisonment.
- 22 Minister of Education left for the Soviet Union with a cultural delegation.
- 30 Soviet-Iraqi Atomic Energy Agreement ratified.

October

- 3 Trial of 27 Iraqi railway officials charged with terrorising their colleagues. Kirkuk trials continue. Four Nationalist newspapers suspended.
- 6 Announcement that Faiq as Sammarrai would be tried *in absentia*.
- 7 Attempt on the Prime Minister's life.
- 11 Notification forbidding removal of peasants from their land.

December

- German Democratic Republic Hygiene Exhibition opened.
- Four Iraqi officials visit the United Kingdom.
- Czechoslovak Industrial Exhibition opened.
- 2 Prime Minister's Press conference before leaving hospital.
- 3 Prime Minister leaves hospital.
- 4 Communist procession to celebrate the Prime Minister's recovery.
- 7 New British Embassy commercial office opened.
- 8 German Democratic Republic-Iraq Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 9 Polish-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 14 United Kingdom-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed.
- 15 Prime Minister's speech to Medical Congress referring to need for establishing of a Palestinian State.
- 16 Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement on Iraqi-Iranian frontier disputes.
- 18 Peasants' procession organised by National Democratic Party to celebrate the Prime Minister's recovery.
- 21 The Prime Minister's speech about the need for establishing a Palestinian Republic and attacking the United Arab Republic and Jordan as having stolen part of Palestine.
- 22 Centre of English Studies opened.
- 26 Trial of 57 persons accused of the attempt on the Prime Minister's life opened.
- 27 Iraqi-Soviet Union Vocational Training Agreement signed.

November

- Second Secretary at the United Arab Republic Embassy declared *persona non grata*.
- Yugoslav-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- Trial of six trade unionists for possessing arms and using undue persuasion on their fellow workers.
- Hungarian-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- Roumanian Industrial Exhibition opened.
- 8 Visit by International Atomic Energy Agency experts.
- Prime Minister's statement to *al Thawra* on the unification of the Fertile Crescent.
- Soviet-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- German Language Institute opened in Baghdad.
- United Democratic (Communist) List win General Union of Students elections.

June

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- 11 Amnesty allowing persons under forced residence to return to their homes.
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- 20 Iraqi Airports open all night. Public execution of Brigadier Tabaqchali and twelve other officers sentenced to death during the Mosul trials. Said Qazi Abdul Jabbar Fahmi, Abdul Jabbar Ay (ex-Commandant of Baghdad Prison) and Bahjat Attiyah hanged.
- 21-26 First trial of persons accused of murder during the Kirkuk riots. One man sentenced to death, two to life imprisonment.
- 22 Minister of Education left for the Soviet Union with a cultural delegation.
- 30 Soviet-Iraqi Atomic Energy Agreement ratified.

October

- 3 Trial of 27 Iraqi railway officials charged with terrorising their colleagues. Kirkuk trials continue. Four Nationalist newspapers suspended.
- 6 Announcement that Faiq al Sammar would be tried *in absentia*.
- 7 Attempt on the Prime Minister's life.
- 11 Notification forbidding removal of peasants from their land.

October

- 13 German Democratic Republic Hygiene Exhibition opened.
- 14 Four Iraqi officials visit the United Kingdom.
- 22 Czechoslovak Industrial Exhibition opened.

November

- 2 Second Secretary at the United Arab Republic Embassy declared *persona non grata*.
- 3 Yugoslav-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 6 Trial of six trade unionists for possessing arms and using undue persuasion on their fellow workers.
- 10 Hungarian-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 12 Roumanian Industrial Exhibition opened.
- 13-18 Visit by International Atomic Energy Agency experts.
- 14 Prime Minister's statement to *al Thawra* on the unification of the Fertile Crescent.
- 15 Soviet-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 23 German Language Institute opened in Baghdad.
- 26 United Democratic (Communist) List win General Union of Students elections.

December

- 2 Prime Minister's Press conference before leaving hospital.
- 3 Prime Minister leaves hospital.
- 4 Communist procession to celebrate the Prime Minister's recovery.
- 7 New British Embassy commercial office opened.
- 8 German Democratic Republic-Iraq Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 9 Polish-Iraqi Cultural Agreement ratified.
- 14 United Kingdom-Iraqi Cultural Agreement signed.
- 15 Prime Minister's speech to Medical Congress referring to need for establishing of a Palestinian State.
- 16 Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement on Iraqi-Iranian frontier disputes.
- 18 Peasants' procession organised by National Democratic Party to celebrate the Prime Minister's recovery.
- 21 The Prime Minister's speech about the need for establishing a Palestinian Republic and attacking the United Arab Republic and Jordan as having stolen part of Palestine.
- 22 Centre of English Studies opened.
- 26 Trial of 57 persons accused of the attempt on the Prime Minister's life opened.
- 27 Iraqi-Soviet Union Vocational Training Agreement signed.

EQ 1015/10

No. 2

CONFLICTING ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received January 25)

SUMMARY

Although Qasim has concentrated much power in his own hands, his failure to give a real lead to the country has resulted in the apparent co-existence of two Governments in Iraq, one Communist and one anti-Communist—this dichotomy persists all through the Administration.

In the long run the spirit of the Administration depends on what is decided in Baghdad, but despite the influence on Qasim of Mahdawi and his friends anti-Communist influence persists at all levels in the State. The Communists can be expected to use the period between now and the elections (which may not take place till well after next summer) to consolidate and strengthen their organisation. Much will depend on whether the main anti-Communist forces have in the meantime been able to hold their own.

(No. 4 S. Confidential) *Baghdad,*
Sir, *January 19, 1960.*

I have the honour to submit a memorandum containing a discussion of the elements which make up the Government in Iraq as distinct from General Qasim himself. Qasim has concentrated much power in his own hands and few Ministers or army officers dare to stand up to him, but some of them and some senior officials in Baghdad and the rest of the country exercise real authority within their own spheres. As Qasim still gives no lead to the country or to his Ministers, the influence of these people and of the other unofficial power groups around him remains of great importance.

2. In some respects there seem to be two Governments in Iraq, one anti-Communist and one Communist. The picture emerges of a Council of Ministers which, despite the influence of a few able men, drifts helplessly without leadership. Ministers and their senior officials often reach conflicting decisions in accordance with their own differing political beliefs. A firm anti-Communist front is maintained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, but Communist sympathisers occupy key positions in some other Departments, especially the Ministry of Education.

3. The influence of the Ministry of Defence and of the Army is of great importance and is on the whole anti-Communist in internal affairs, though, as is to be expected, favourable to the USSR which is supplying large quantities of armaments at cut rates. Against this, there are the destructive Left-wing influences of Mahdawi and his circle.

4. The apparent co-existence of two Governments persists all through the Administration. In the Judiciary, there are the anti-Communist Martial Courts and the strong pro-Communist People's Court. In the districts, the Mutasarrifs and the police and security officials are strongly anti-Communist while, for example, a number of local Directors of Education are pro-Communist.

5. In the long run the spirit of the Administration depends on what is decided in Baghdad, but, despite the influence on Qasim of Mahdawi and his friends, anti-Communist influence persists at all levels in the State. The elections under the new constitution will test the relative strengths of the two strains in the Government. But the constitution will probably not be ready before July 14, and elections may not take place until much later. The Communists will use the intervening period to strengthen their organisation, powerful in some areas, particularly Baghdad, but virtually non-existent in the closed Nationalist areas such as Ramadi and Samarra. Major questions are whether the National Democrats will be able to establish an effective organisation in competition with them and whether, when the elections approach, the main anti-Communist forces in the Administration have been able to hold their own.

6. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Amman, Beirut, Cairo and Washington, to the Political Office, Middle East Forces, and to Her Majesty's Consul-General at Basra.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

CONFIDENTIAL

EQ 10328/2

No. 3

VISIT OF THE KING OF MOROCCO TO BAGHDAD

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received 15 February)

(No. 13. Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
8 February, 1960.

King Muhammad V of Morocco paid his State visit to Baghdad from the 31st of January to the 3rd of February, the period of three days contrasting with the 12 days which he spent in the United Arab Republic. Historical precedents for the State visit of a monarch to a regicide must be few. The empty plinth remaining after the overthrow of King Feisal I's statue was hastily removed a few days before the visit. The incongruity seemed to be felt by both sides since the Iraqis made an attempt to give the King a republican flavour. He was officially addressed not as "His Majesty" but as "His Siadat", the great popular monarch. (The word "Siadat" was, I understand, applied to the Caliphs and so probably caused no offence.) According to a Moroccan story, the King is said to have remarked somewhat acidly that he had been popular in his own country for a long time. The implication in Qasim's public statements that he was in a rather superior category to other monarchs are reported to have been strongly resented by the Saudi Arabian Ambassador who regarded the tone of these remarks as implying an insult to his own King.

2. The King was the first Head of State to visit Iraq since the revolution. There were no guards of honour, a fact which was remarked on with some asperity by one of my Communist colleagues at his arrival. I also heard unfavourable comments on this by two retired brigadiers of the Iraq Army, still well in with the Government, one of them particularly remarking on the absence of the guard when the King paid his visit to the Sovereignty Council. A guard of honour, he remarked, is provided to do honour. Some saw in the absence of guards of honour a security precaution, though I am inclined to think that it was merely a manifestation of Republican protocol caused by the mistaken feeling in the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm that guards of honour were part of a peculiarly royal ceremonial which should be abolished. Security precautions were very strict, both for the Royal guest and for the Prime Minister. Two of my Communist colleagues exhibited great amusement on the arrival of the Prime Minister at the airport to meet the King, when a screen of soldiers armed with Sten-guns was placed between the Prime Minister's tent and the tent of the Heads of Diplomatic Missions, having the effect of a manoeuvre designed to protect the Prime Minister from the foreign representatives. There was a good deal of jockeying for position between General Rubai'i, the President of the Sovereignty Council, and the Prime Minister. Rubai'i arrived at least 45 minutes before Qasim at the airport on the first day, but on most occasions was given his correct position. At the dinner given by the King, Qasim was presented with a gold sword while Rubai'i had to content himself with the Order which Qasim also received, a discrimination which Rubai'i appeared somewhat to resent; but it was later announced that Rubai'i and the Minister for Foreign Affairs had subsequently received jewelled daggers and some effort was made to describe Rubai'i's dagger in especially flattering terms. The crowds in Baghdad did not appear to take much interest in the visit. Everything remained quiet except in Adhimyah and Kadhimain where rival demonstrations began, causing the cancellation of the King's projected visit to the famous Gailani and Kadhimain mosques. One day was spent in a visit to the Shi'ah shrines at Kerbala and Nejef. The crowds there are reported to have used the occasion for shouting political slogans rather than for welcoming the visitor.

3. The King kept Rubai'i and Qasim waiting for an hour at the airport on his departure. This may merely have been a demonstration that punctuality is not the politeness of Arab Princes, though it hardly augured that great cordiality had been achieved by the visit. The general impression was that it started rather stickily but got better towards the end, but I shall have no reliable evidence on the political effects of the visit until my Moroccan colleague returns after some weeks to Baghdad. The Moroccan journalists seemed chiefly concerned in finding

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out how near Iraq was to Communism, perhaps as a result of what they had been told in Cairo. The official line put out by members of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that the Moroccans were pleased to find Iraq was much more stable than was believed outside. Nothing very significant could be deduced from the communiqué (a copy of which is enclosed), but some specifically Iraqi preoccupations found expression in it. It contained a reference to working to rectify the Arab League charter in a manner insuring full equality between the countries subscribing to it and to the avoidance of interference in the internal affairs of each country. It had been noticed in Baghdad before the King's arrival that since the King's visit to Egypt, Cairo Radio had been rather milder in its remarks about Iraq, and it was possible that for a time at any rate the King may have achieved some diminution of the propaganda battle between the two capitals. This is supported by a Moroccan source, the story being that Qasim promised to work gradually for a better atmosphere. It does not seem likely, however, that the King will have achieved much and there was no suggestion from the Moroccan side that he was seriously attempting mediation.

4. Qasim's announcement of the gift of Iraqi military aircraft apparently took the Moroccans by surprise. In his speech he referred to "new modern aircraft" which would form the nucleus of the Moroccan Air Force (a somewhat patronising phrase) and would be complete in arms, equipment and spare parts. The official news agency translated this into jets. The story circulating in Baghdad (from a Moroccan source) is that MiGs were originally offered, but that the Moroccans said that they could not use them since they had not got the trained personnel and other necessary facilities. In the end, the gift, according to a statement of the Commander of the Iraq Air Force to my Air Attaché, was of four Sea Furies, which Qasim would certainly not normally refer to as "new" or "modern". Whatever the truth of the story, it was surely not a very happy idea. If it was MiGs in the first place, obviously many people might be expected to think that the Russians had suggested it and had promised to replace them in the hope that they would introduce further supplies of Soviet aircraft into Morocco. It seems unlikely that the Russians would try such a crude manoeuvre and, if MiGs were mentioned, it was more likely an improvisation by Qasim without inspiration from outside, designed in a somewhat parvenu manner to show that Iraq could afford richer gifts than anyone else in the neighbourhood. If it was all along Sea Furies, the offer was likely to create the impression that the Iraqis wanted to get rid of their older British equipment and were giving a present which would cost them nothing. Qasim would probably have done better to confine himself to his other present to the King of a fine copy of the Koran, endorsed with a verse in his own hand, presumably selected as a back-hander against Cairo, "Co-operate among yourselves in charity and piety and not in sin and aggression".

5. I was told that the King would ask Qasim to free or commute the sentences of the members of the old régime sentenced to death. I asked that he should do this, but he would in any case have raised the case of Fadhil Jamali, for whom he had previously intervened and to whom he feels himself indebted for support of the Moroccan case in the United Nations. A first report is that Qasim promised gradually to move towards a modification of the prisoners' status.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Amman, Beirut, Rabat, Washington, Cairo, Tunis, Tripoli, Khartoum, Tel Aviv, Moscow, Bahrain, Kuwait, Ankara, Tehran and Karachi, the United Kingdom Delegation to NATO, the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, and the Political Officer with the Middle East Forces.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

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Enclosure No. 1

A JOINT COMMUNIQUE BY HIS SIADAT THE POPULAR KING MOHAMMAD V AND HIS EXCELLENCY LEADER ABDUL KARIM QASIM

In response to the invitation extended by the Iraq Republic, His Siadat the great popular monarch, King Muhammad V of Morocco, paid a State visit to Iraq during the period from the 31st of January to the 3rd of February, 1960. During this visit talks of interest to the Arab world in particular and the current international situation in general were conducted between His Siadat the great popular King and His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim, the Prime Minister of the Iraq Republic. The two parties have agreed on the following:

- (1) Strengthening the unity of the Arab countries, developing the spirit of getting them closer together, establishing relations between all on the basis of brotherhood, co-operation and solidarity, and making all endeavours to unite the members of the Arab rank.
- (2) Pursuing a constructive policy aiming at raising the prestige of the Arab countries, raising the standard of their peoples, securing their full independence, realising their progress and enabling them to carry out their mission in the world under the inspiration of the sublime Islamic standards and on the basis of dignity, nobility, high ideals of Arab nationalism, justice and fraternity between the sons of the people.
- (3) Strengthening the Arab League, working to rectify its charter in a manner insuring full equality between the countries subscribed to it, respecting the structure of each of these countries, non-interference in their affairs so as to turn the League into an active instrumentality for co-operation and solidarity between the Arab countries.
- (4) Supporting all the Arab peoples, the peoples of Algeria, Palestine and Oman in the Vanguard who are struggling for their freedom and liberation, supporting the will of the habitants of Moslem Arab Mauritania to be restored to the Moroccan community since it was a member of this community before the foreign domination.
- (5) Adopting solidarity with all colonised peoples struggling for their independence and freedom throughout the world.
- (6) Backing all efforts made to relax the international tension and strengthening peace and co-operation in the world on the basis of respecting human rights as well as the independence and freedom of people in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Enclosure No. 2

KING MUHAMMAD LEAVES IRAQ

His Siadat the great popular monarch, King Muhammad V of Morocco, left Baghdad for Beirut at 11 a.m. to-day after a three-day State visit to the Iraq Republic. An official ceremony took place at the airport to see the Moroccan monarch off. The ceremony was attended by their Excellencies the President and members of the Sovereignty Council, His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim, the Prime Minister, and members of the welcoming body including Cabinet Ministers, the Chief of General Staff, the Moroccan Ambassador in Baghdad, Heads of diplomatic missions in Iraq, Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Iraq's Ambassador in Morocco, the Amin Al-Asimah, the Mutassarif of Baghdad Liwa, the Director-General of Police, the Director-General of Protocol and Head of the Sovereignty Council Ceremonies.

On the arrival of the popular monarch, King Muhammad V, at the airport the military band played the royal Moroccan anthem and the Iraqi Republican anthem. Members of the royan entourage shook hands with their Excellencies the President and members of the Sovereignty Council, His Excellency the Leader and

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the Ministers on the occasion of their departure from the Iraq Republic. Then the Ministers and members of the welcoming body bid His Majesty and His Excellency Sayid Abdullah Ibrahim, the Moroccan Premier, good-bye.

Afterwards His Majesty, accompanied by the President and Members of the Sovereignty Council and Leader Abdul Karim Qasim headed for the private royal aircraft. After the Moroccan royal anthem and the Iraqi Republican anthem were played, His Majesty shook hands with the President of the Sovereignty Council and then with Leader Abdul Karim Qasim. On the aircraft's ladder the Arab monarch raised his hand in salutation.

King Muhammad V arrived in Baghdad on the 31st of January. During his stay in the Iraq Republic he visited Iraqi military institutes and the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbala.

By command of His Majesty the Moroccan monarch, a dinner banquet was given last night at the Amanah Hall in honour of His Excellency the President of the Sovereignty Council and His Excellency the Leader. Before attending the banquet, His Siadat the great popular king, Muhammad V, spent some time at the office of His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim in the Ministry of Defence during which His Majesty engaged himself in a cordial brotherly talk with His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim and His Excellency General Najib Al-Rubai'i, the President of the Sovereignty Council. The call lasted half an hour. Before departing from the Ministry of Defence, His Siadat the great popular King saw the bullet holes made in the car in which His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim was riding during the treacherous attempt on his life.

At the dinner banquet, His Siadat the great popular monarch, King Muhammad V of Morocco, presented a gift to His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim, the gift being a precious sword with a golden scabbard deposited in a red gilded box on which was inscribed a verse from the Holy Quran to the effect that all should unite in the way of God the Almighty.

His Majesty then conferred the throne sash, which is the highest decoration in the Kingdom of Morocco, on each of the President of the Sovereignty Council and His Excellency Leader Abdul Karim Qasim.

EQ 1017/44

No. 4

THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF GENERAL QASIM

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd? (Received March 21)

SUMMARY

On February 25-26, 17 persons accused of complicity in the attempt on General Qasim's life on October 17 were sentenced to death, 51 received terms of imprisonment and 8 were acquitted.

2. The attempt was organised by Iraqi Ba'athists. The People's Court wished to show that the U.A.R. was directly involved but could bring no plausible evidence. Allegations implicating the President of the Sovereignty Council and the Military Governor-General in a plot against General Qasim were dismissed by Colonel Mahdawi as false.

3. During the proceedings a British subject, Mr. Leslie Marsh, who appeared as a witness, was accused of being a spy. No charges have however yet been laid against him.

4. Most of the verdicts appeared justified. Several accused, however, were evidently charged and sentenced solely for their Ba'athi associations.

5. Colonel Mahdawi's conduct at the trial disgusted moderate Iraqis and there is increased hostility to the People's Court.

(No. 24. Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
March 15, 1960.

As reported in my telegram No. 310 of February 26, the trial before the People's Court of 76 of the 78 persons accused of complicity in the attempted assassination of General Qasim ended on the night of February 25-26. Seventeen of the accused were sentenced to death, eight were acquitted and 51 were sentenced to terms varying between hard labour for life and six months' imprisonment. Ba'ath Party property is to be confiscated and those convicted are to pay compensation to the family of General Qasim's driver and to those wounded during the attempt. The case against the remaining two accused is to continue separately. A full list of the accused and their sentences is attached⁽¹⁾.

2. The trial began on December 26, 1959, when the accused were collectively charged with conspiring to kill the Prime Minister, with murder, attempted murder and wilful injury, and with committing hostile acts against the Iraqi Republic in concert with

a foreign Power. As there were 78 cases to be heard, including the 21 tried *in absentia*, the accused were divided into seven unequal groups. The division appeared arbitrary, except that the first group included the self-confessed organiser of the attempt, Ayad Said Thabit, and 10 other persons directly concerned in it; the sixth group consisted of smugglers and gun-runners who had no direct connexion with the plot; and the seventh group included four of the accused whom the prosecution expected to provide the most important evidence. The accused were mainly young men and a large proportion were students. None of those directly concerned who appeared in court were over 30. The groups were taken consecutively during the next seven weeks. The last hearing before the court adjourned to consider the verdicts was on January 30.

3. The case put by the Military Prosecutor, Colonel Majid Amin, was that the accused had plotted since the failure of the Mosul Revolt to assassinate

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

General Qasim. The attempt had been organised by the Ba'ath Party in Iraq with the active support of the Government of the United Arab Republic and of Ba'ath leaders in the U.A.R. It was originally to have been made in the first half of 1959 but was called off in the summer when the Ba'athis considered that the improved conditions in Iraq no longer warranted it. The plot was revived when Brigadier Tabaqchali was brought to trial and was pressed to its conclusion thereafter with the help of the U.A.R. Embassy in Iraq. A team of six gunmen were trained in a desert spot near Musayib, south of Baghdad, and a flat was rented on Rashid Street along which General Qasim regularly drove between his house and the Ministry of Defence. The gunmen went to the flat on October 3 intending to assassinate General Qasim that day but it was not until October 7 that the observer posted to warn them by telephone of General Qasim's approach gave them sufficient warning to position themselves. A car was driven across the street to block the route and the gunmen opened fire with sub-machine guns from both sides of the street. They killed General Qasim's driver, wounded his A.D.C., Major Janabi, and eight bystanders. Their crossfire also killed one of their own number, Abdul Wahhab al Ghairi, and wounded another, Samir Abdul Aziz al Najm. They made their escape in a waiting taxi, believing that General Qasim was dead.

4. During the trial many of the statements by witnesses and accused were clearly untrustworthy. Some of the accused repudiated their statements made to the preliminary investigation on the grounds that these had been extracted by threats or actual torture. Such statements were nevertheless produced in court either as written *procès-verbaux* or as tape recordings. It was not however difficult to distinguish factual evidence from that which the prosecution had manufactured for its own purposes. The main evidence was supplied by the three accused who pleaded guilty; Ayad Said Thabit, who gave an outline of the conspiracy, Samir Abdul Aziz al Najm, and Shakir Hilaiwa, who provided evidence in detail against accused in all seven groups. Najm repented in court for having shot at the Prime Minister and his death sentence was accompanied by a recommendation to mercy. Hilaiwa was originally trained to be a gunman but was subsequently suspended from the Ba'ath

Party for having made an unauthorised visit to Syria. He turned State evidence and seems to have been entirely in the prosecution's hands. The stories given by these three agreed closely except in one direction, and provided a comprehensive and, so far as can be judged, accurate account of the abortive attempt. The exception was the extent of complicity by the Government of the U.A.R. and by Ba'athis outside Iraq. This was also the main point on which the prosecution case differed from the bulk of evidence produced and corroborated in court.

5. The prosecution claimed that instructions regarding the attempt had been passed from the U.A.R. authorities, particularly the Deuxieme Bureau in Damascus, through the U.A.R. Embassy in Baghdad which supplied ID.4,000 to buy a car and weapons. Representatives of the plotters had attended the Ba'ath Conference in Beirut in August 1959, and had then concerted plans with the U.A.R. authorities, including Nasser himself, and with Ba'ath leaders in Syria. The accused, except Hilaiwa, insisted that the attempt had been organised entirely by Ba'athis in Iraq and that the U.A.R. had not been involved. The accused admitted that tape recordings describing the treatment of political prisoners in Iraq had indeed been passed to Tawfiq Abaza, the Second Secretary of the U.A.R. Embassy who was later declared *persona non grata*, but insisted that this was the only contact that the conspirators had with the Embassy. The Military Prosecutor and Colonel Mahdawi assumed U.A.R. complicity and tried hard to prove it, but the evidence rested on the unsupported and unconvincing word of Shakir Hilaiwa.

6. Otherwise, the attempt was apparently planned and carried out much as the prosecution had stated. Some 25 persons appear to have been involved. Sixteen were directly concerned. These were the three who were responsible for organising the attempt; Ayad Said Thabit and his superiors in the Ba'ath hierarchy, Midhat Jumaa (who fled the country) and Khalid Ali Salih; Shakir Hilaiwa; Hilal Naji, who trained the gunmen; Hashim al Amer, who supplied sub-machine guns and helped to select the training ground: the six gunmen, of whom Abdul Wahhab al Ghairi was killed and three escaped from Iraq: Salim Isa Zaybaq, who blocked the street in front of General Qasim's car; Taha Yasin Ali, who

warning of General Qasim's approach later fled the country; Ali Hasun, in whose taxi the surviving gunmen left the scene of the attempt and, possibly, Hazim Bakri, from whose clinic Yasin made his warning telephone call. All these were sentenced to death except Ali Hasun, who received life imprisonment, and Hashim al Amer, who went to prison for three years. The prosecution's case against them all was adequately proved except for Hazim Bakri, against whom no conclusive evidence was produced. There was no explanation of Hashim al Amer's lenient treatment, nor why a doctor, Tahsin Mualla, who treated Yasin's wound and must at least have detected how he got it, went to prison for six months. Four others were probably heavily involved, but the evidence produced against them would not have justified a properly-conducted court. These were Abdul Hamid Marei, a Syrian and Yasin's brother-in-law, who was accused of carrying messages between the plotters and the U.A.R. authorities; Abdul Jabbar al Samarra, Fadhl Abdul fur al Shahir and Abdullah Rikabi. The first four were sentenced to death, the last three, who were described as members of the Ba'ath regional command, *in absentia*. Marei had already been exiled from Iraq for subversive activities. A further five persons, including a police officer, who were given stiff prison sentences were probably implicated but the evidence against them was still less satisfactory.

According to the Military Prosecutor, there were two other groups of the accused who were plotting to assassinate General Qasim at about the same time. However, the ten persons who were said to form the "second group" included two who were working with the first group and the distinction between these groups was never explained. At the event, the other eight persons in the "second group" were given prison sentences ranging between six months and ten years. They were, or had been, Ba'ath supporters and their actions had not been under suspicion, but there was no indication that they had any connexion with the attempt or indeed that they were working together as a group. The "third group", consisting of Kadhim Azzawi, Midhat al Sirri and Faisal Habin al Khaiziran, in fact seem to have formed a distinct party. The two main witnesses against

them, and Kadhim Azzawi himself, produced a mixed bag of accusations. The gist of these was that Azzawi and Sirri had conspired to kill General Qasim and that Azzawi had engaged in espionage for Mr. Leslie Marsh, a British subject who was detained without charges two days after the attempt and has since been seriously ill. The witnesses suggested that Mr. Marsh knew of the attempt to kill General Qasim, but their statements were thoroughly implausible. Mr. Marsh, who was brought into court, strenuously denied all the accusations made against him. At first Azzawi also insistently denied the accusation, but finally announced on January 25 that he wished to make a full confession. He admitted then that he had plotted to kill General Qasim on January 30 and that he had been enlisted as a spy by Mr. Marsh. He said that Mr. Marsh was not the leading British spy, but took his orders from a member of the British Embassy, known to Azzawi only as "Abu Jasim". Another member of the Embassy, "Richmond" was also mentioned as having engaged in espionage and before the revolution Azzawi had dealt with two British agents called Tomsitt and Smellie. He declared however that he had only plotted with Sirri in order to gather information against him and that Mr. Marsh knew nothing of the attempted assassination. He went on to claim that a number of leading persons in the present Iraqi administration had approved the plot, including the President of the Sovereignty Council and the Military Governor-General. The U.A.R. had not been involved since General Rubai, the President of the Sovereignty Council, hated Nasser. Colonel Mahdawi dismissed these accusations as malicious attacks on respected and loyal persons and announced that a separate trial, which would also look into the allegations of espionage, would be held to deal with the cases of Azzawi and Sirri and also of the two witnesses, who are now under arrest. Faisal Habib's case was however concluded with those of the other accused; he received ten years' imprisonment *in absentia* for being a member of the Ba'ath command in Baghdad and committing hostile acts against the Republic. On Azzawi's evidence he had opposed Sirri's plot to kill General Qasim when told of it by Azzawi. No good evidence was brought to connect him with the "first" plot.

General Qasim. The attempt had been organised by the Ba'ath Party in Iraq with the active support of the Government of the United Arab Republic and of Ba'ath leaders in the U.A.R. It was originally to have been made in the first half of 1959 but was called off in the summer when the Ba'athis considered that the improved conditions in Iraq no longer warranted it. The plot was revived when Brigadier Tabaqchali was brought to trial and was pressed to its conclusion thereafter with the help of the U.A.R. Embassy in Iraq. A team of six gunmen were trained in a desert spot near Musayib, south of Baghdad, and a flat was rented on Rashid Street along which General Qasim regularly drove between his house and the Ministry of Defence. The gunmen went to the flat on October 3 intending to assassinate General Qasim that day but it was not until October 7 that the observer posted to warn them by telephone of General Qasim's approach gave them sufficient warning to position themselves. A car was driven across the street to block the route and the gunmen opened fire with sub-machine guns from both sides of the street. They killed General Qasim's driver, wounded his A.D.C., Major Janabi, and eight bystanders. Their crossfire also killed one of their own number, Abdul Wahhab al Ghairi, and wounded another, Samir Abdul Aziz al Najm. They made their escape in a waiting taxi, believing that General Qasim was dead.

4. During the trial many of the statements by witnesses and accused were clearly untrustworthy. Some of the accused repudiated their statements made to the preliminary investigation on the grounds that these had been extracted by threats or actual torture. Such statements were nevertheless produced in court either as written *procès-verbaux* or as tape recordings. It was not however difficult to distinguish factual evidence from that which the prosecution had manufactured for its own purposes. The main evidence was supplied by the three accused who pleaded guilty; Ayad Said Thabit, who gave an outline of the conspiracy, Samir Abdul Aziz al Najm, and Shakir Hilaiwa, who provided evidence in detail against accused in all seven groups. Najm repented in court for having shot at the Prime Minister and his death sentence was accompanied by a recommendation to mercy. Hilaiwa was originally trained to be a gunman but was subsequently suspended from the Ba'ath

Party for having made an unauthorised visit to Syria. He turned State evidence against himself and seems to have been entirely in the prosecution's hands. The stories given by these three agreed closely except in detail, and provided a comprehensive and, so far as can be judged, accurate account of the abortive attempt. The exception was the extent of complicity of the Government of the U.A.R. and Ba'athis outside Iraq. This was also the main point on which the prosecution differed from the bulk of evidence produced and corroborated in court.

5. The prosecution claimed that instructions regarding the attempt had been passed from the U.A.R. authorities, particularly the Deuxieme Bureau in Damascus, through the U.A.R. Embassy in Baghdad which supplied ID.4,000 to buy a car and weapons. Representatives of the plotters had attended the Ba'ath Conference in Beirut in August 1959, and had then concerted plans with the U.A.R. authorities, including Najm himself, and with Ba'ath leaders in Syria. The accused, except Hilaiwa, insisted that the attempt had been organised entirely by Ba'athis in Iraq and that the U.A.R. had not been involved. The accused admitted that tape recordings describing the treatment of political prisoners in Iraq had indeed been passed to Tawfiq Abaza, the Second Secretary of the U.A.R. Embassy, who was later declared *persona non grata* but insisted that this was the only contact that the conspirators had with the Embassy. The Military Prosecutor and Colonel Mahdawi assumed U.A.R. complicity and tried hard to prove it, but the evidence rested on the unsupported and unconvincing word of Shakir Hilaiwa.

6. Otherwise, the attempt was apparently planned and carried out much as the prosecution had stated. Some 25 persons appear to have been involved. Sixteen were directly concerned. These were the three who were responsible for organising the attempt; Ayad Said Thabit and his superior in the Ba'ath hierarchy, Midhat Jun (who fled the country) and Khalid Ali Salim; Shakir Hilaiwa; Hilal Naji, who trained the gunmen; Hashim al Amer, who supplied sub-machine guns and helped to select the training ground: the six gunmen, of whom Abdul Wahhab al Ghairi was killed and three escaped from Iraq: Salim Zaybaq, who blocked the street in front of General Qasim's car; Taha Yasin Ali, who

gave warning of General Qasim's approach and later fled the country; Ali Hasun, in whose taxi the surviving gunmen left the scene of the attempt and, possibly, Dr. Hazim Bakri, from whose clinic Taha Yasin made his warning telephone calls. All these were sentenced to death except Ali Hasun, who received life imprisonment, and Hashim al Amer, who went to prison for three years. The prosecution's case against them all was adequately proved except for Hazim Bakri, against whom no conclusive evidence was offered. There was no explanation of Hashim al Amer's lenient treatment, nor of why a doctor, Tahsin Mualla, who treated Najm's wound and must at least have suspected how he got it, went to prison for only six months. Four others were probably heavily involved, but the evidence produced against them would not have satisfied a properly-conducted court. These were Abdul Hamid Marei, a Syrian and Ayad Said Thabit's brother-in-law, who was accused of carrying messages between the plotters and the U.A.R. authorities; Abdul Jabbar al Samarra, Fadhil Abdul Ghafur al Shahir and Abdullah Rikabi. All four were sentenced to death, the last three, who were described as members of the Ba'ath regional command, *in absentia*. Marei had already been exiled from Baghdad for subversive activities. A further five persons, including a police officer, who were given stiff prison sentences were probably implicated but the evidence against them was still less satisfactory.

7. According to the Military Prosecutor, there were two other groups of the accused plotting to assassinate General Qasim at about the same time. However, the ten people who were said to form the "second group" included two who were working with the first group and the distinction between these groups was never explained. In the event, the other eight persons in the "second group" were given prison sentences ranging between six months and five years. They were, or had been, Ba'ath supporters and their actions had not been above suspicion, but there was no indication that they had any connexion with the attempt or indeed that they were working together as a group. The "third group", consisting of Kadhim Azzawi, Midhat al Haj Sirri and Faisal Habin al Khaiziran, does in fact seem to have formed a distinct entity. The two main witnesses against

them, and Kadhim Azzawi himself, produced a mixed bag of accusations. The gist of these was that Azzawi and Sirri had conspired to kill General Qasim and that Azzawi had engaged in espionage for Mr. Leslie Marsh, a British subject who was detained without charges two days after the attempt and has since been seriously ill. The witnesses suggested that Mr. Marsh knew of the attempt to kill General Qasim, but their statements were thoroughly implausible. Mr. Marsh, who was brought into court, strenuously denied all the accusations made against him. At first Azzawi also insistently denied the accusation, but finally announced on January 25 that he wished to make a full confession. He admitted then that he had plotted to kill General Qasim on January 30 and that he had been enlisted as a spy by Mr. Marsh. He said that Mr. Marsh was not the leading British spy, but took his orders from a member of the British Embassy, known to Azzawi only as "Abu Jasim". Another member of the Embassy, "Richmond" was also mentioned as having engaged in espionage and before the revolution Azzawi had dealt with two British agents called Tomsitt and Smellie. He declared however that he had only plotted with Sirri in order to gather information against him and that Mr. Marsh knew nothing of the attempted assassination. He went on to claim that a number of leading persons in the present Iraqi administration had approved the plot, including the President of the Sovereignty Council and the Military Governor-General. The U.A.R. had not been involved since General Rubai, the President of the Sovereignty Council, hated Nasser. Colonel Mahdawi dismissed these accusations as malicious attacks on respected and loyal persons and announced that a separate trial, which would also look into the allegations of espionage, would be held to deal with the cases of Azzawi and Sirri and also of the two witnesses, who are now under arrest. Faisal Habib's case was however concluded with those of the other accused; he received ten years' imprisonment *in absentia* for being a member of the Ba'ath command in Baghdad and committing hostile acts against the Republic. On Azzawi's evidence he had opposed Sirri's plot to kill General Qasim when told of it by Azzawi. No good evidence was brought to connect him with the "first" plot.

8. The proceedings were rather quieter than in previous trials. There were no interruptions by cheerleaders and poetry readers in the audience. Shouts for General Qasim were allowed only at cues given by Colonel Mahdawi, who had the claue under complete control. The defence lawyers appointed by the court for once left irrelevant political observations out of their statements and in many instances actually attacked the prosecution's case. But, as usual, it was not only a trial of the accused, but a political forum for attacking Iraq's enemies. Colonel Mahdawi opened each session with his inevitable tirade against Iraq's neighbours and the CENTO States. Nasser and the U.A.R. were again the main target but there was also a flow of unrestrained personal abuse of King Hussein and the Shah. At this time the Iraqi-Iranian quarrel over the Shatt al Arab had flared up and Iran was continually condemned for attempted aggression at the instigation of her "imperialist allies". There were also references to "plotting Embassies" in Baghdad, which Mahdawi declared would have been blotted out with artillery had General Qasim been killed. Following a number of my colleagues, I protested to the Foreign Minister about this statement, but received no satisfactory reply.

9. During the hearings Colonel Mahdawi bullied the accused in his worst manner. On the whole they gave a good account of themselves and more than once succeeded in making Mahdawi foolish. Ahmad Taha al Azzuz, the second accused, proclaimed from the dock that the trial was a mockery and acquitted himself well in a three-minute shouting match with Mahdawi. Ayad Said Thabit demanded to be allowed to make a full statement giving the reasons for the attempted assassination and explaining his loyalty to the country. This was refused and Colonel Mahdawi upheld the Military Prosecutor's contention that the accused should not make statements and might defend themselves only in the course of interrogation by him at the conclusion of the individual cases against them. Their defence statements should be submitted to the court in writing. As in previous trials the evidence was extremely badly presented. Much of it was either irrelevant or, as Colonel Majid Amin himself admitted in four cases, inadequate. Nevertheless, all but about twelve of the sentences appear to have been justified and, surprisingly enough, much of the evidence given under duress or

by witnesses obviously acting out of personal spite, was discounted. Thus Abdul Razzaq al Ghair, brother of the dead gunman, who made a self-incriminatory statement during the preliminary investigation and later repudiated it, was sentenced to only six months' imprisonment, and another accused whom a witness had "seen at the time and place of the attempt carrying a sub-machine gun" was acquitted. The court was, however, determined to make an example of the "criminal Ba'ath Party" as it was described throughout the proceedings. Several accused were clearly charged and sentenced only because of their association with the Ba'ath, and no evidence was produced connecting them with the attempted assassination. These included Fuad Rikabi, the former Minister who was sentenced to death *in absentia*; and Shamsi Kadhim and Karim Shintaf, who received life imprisonment for no apparent reason other than that the former had worked for Fuad Rikabi and that the latter had drafted a Ba'ath Party pamphlet. The court was also determined to press home the charge that the conspirators had been working in collaboration with the U.A.R. authorities and this was written into the final indictments of the ringleaders. These final indictments were not in many cases the same charges which had originally been brought against the accused, but were the counts on which the court, after reviewing the evidence, considered that the accused were guilty. A number of accused who were liable to the death penalty under the original charges, were eventually sentenced on counts such as possessing unlicensed firearms which carried comparatively short prison terms.

10. As mentioned in paragraph 8 the accused were not allowed to read their defence statements in court. However, enough was said by Ayad Said Thabit to give a good idea of the lines of this defence. This would probably have been based on the fact that the decision to kill Qasim was first taken in April 1959. The decision was withdrawn in July but taken again in August. The political reasons for this are clear. April was the time of the so-called "red terror" when Iraq appeared to be sliding headlong into Communism; in July Qasim appeared to have turned against Communism; in August he made his speech supporting Mahdawi and started the Tabaqchali trial. Thus the defence would

have been a full-blooded attack on Communism and on Qasim for supporting it. It is not surprising that the court did not allow the accused to develop this theme.

11. In spite of the obvious guilt of at least some of the accused, the trial disgusted moderate Iraqis and increased popular hostility to Colonel Mahdawi. It was the flagrant injustice of a few sentences, not the reasonableness of the majority, that attracted comment. There was no general indignation against the accused, nor have the allegations of British espionage affected the attitude of Iraqis towards this Embassy. The hearings further damaged Iraq's reputation abroad and General Qasim's own standing has been affected to some extent

by his continued support for the court. Iraq now waits to see whether Qasim will carry out the death sentences.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Ankara, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Kuwait, Tehran, Tel Aviv, Washington, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations in New York and the United Kingdom Delegation to NATO, to the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Karachi and to the Political Office, Middle East Forces, and at Headquarters, British Forces in the Arabian Peninsula.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

EQ 10338/11

No. 5

A REPORT ON Mr. MIKOYAN'S VISIT TO IRAQ, APRIL 8-15, 1960

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received May 16)

SUMMARY

Mr. Mikoyan visited Iraq from April 8-15. The initiative came from the USSR. His purpose was probably to assess the situation and assure Qasim of the Soviet Government's continued support. The visit was helpful to Qasim's prestige but there is no evidence that Iraq gained any economic benefits from it (paragraphs 1 and 2).

2. In spite of large Communist crowds in Baghdad, the visit was not by any means a triumphal progress. It was particularly unsuccessful in Basra. The Nationalist Press was hostile (paragraphs 3 and 4).

3. There was no sign that Mr. Mikoyan concerned himself at all during his visit with the affairs of the Iraqi Communists (paragraph 5).

4. The Iraqis claim that the Russians received something of a shock on hearing a blunt statement of the Iraqi Government's policy. The general impression was that the visit was not a great success. But it seems likely that Mr. Mikoyan was able to convince Qasim that he could still rely on Soviet Government support and that the Soviet Government were not seriously concerned by his treatment of the Iraq Communist Party (paragraph 6).

(No. 38 S. Confidential) *Baghdad,*
Sir, *May 7, 1960.*

Mr. Mikoyan visited Iraq from the 8th to the 15th April ostensibly to open the Soviet Industrial Exhibition. I enclose a memorandum by my Commercial Counsellor on the exhibition. Before Mr. Mikoyan's arrival, the Iraqis were at pains to point out that the initiative for the visit came from him and we have no reason to doubt this. The purpose of his visit was probably to assess the situation in Iraq and to convey to Qasim personally that he could rely on the Soviet Government for political, military and economic support and that the Soviet Government would neither concern themselves with his relations with the Iraq Communist Party nor interfere in Iraq's internal affairs.

2. The visit was doubtless welcome to Qasim for reasons of prestige. It is unlikely that the Iraqis expected any economic benefits from the visit. They probably did not want any increase in the loan under the Soviet-Iraqi agreement, although it is likely that they would have welcomed some changes in its terms, since there is reason to believe that they are not entirely happy with

its operation and are dissatisfied with the rate of exchange fixed under it. Mr. Mikoyan made it quite clear in public at the end of the visit that there would be no change in the agreement, which he alleged was satisfactory to both parties.

3. Qasim took a lot of trouble over the visit. He met Mikoyan and saw him off at the airport; he made a speech at the opening of the Soviet exhibition; numerous official entertainments were exchanged and there were two four-hour conferences. The Iraqi Communists organised large crowds at the airport on Mr. Mikoyan's arrival and at the opening of the exhibition, at which the Army organised an efficient claque. But it was by no means a triumphal progress. The Foreign Ministry officials in charge of the arrangements, staunchly anti-Communist and delighting in telling stories of Mikoyan's bad manners, rigidity and habit of delivering humourless lectures to all and sundry, in sharp contrast with Soekarno's informality and charm, told us of the total indifference of the local populace when Mr. Mikoyan made an unannounced visit to Musaiyib and there seems to have been no great public interest apart from the major occasions.

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Mr. Mikoyan seems to have been particularly annoyed with his reception in Basra. The Mutasarrif and other local officials, also strongly anti-Communist, apparently kept him almost isolated in the port suburb of Ma'akil. They were presumably intent on avoiding possible Communist demonstrations and Nationalist counter-demonstrations. But the Basrawis were annoyed by the strict security precautions and criticised Mr. Mikoyan. An article complaining about his treatment in Basra is said to have been published in *Isvestia* before his departure from Iraq and is supposed to have put something of a damper on the last part of his visit. The officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented that Mr. Mikoyan was only being treated in Basra in the same way as Iraqis and other foreign visitors were treated in the Soviet Union.

4. Mr. Mikoyan's speech at the Industrial Exhibition was widely criticised. Why, it was asked, should he not have confined himself to the remarks suitable to the opening of an industrial exhibition instead of making a political speech? Qasim's speech on the same occasion was generally interpreted as being a notice to the Soviet Government that Iraq was determined to maintain real independence and not to be anyone's satellite, although it must be admitted that the text needs a good deal of interpretation to acquire this meaning. As Mr. Mikoyan came to Iraq during a time of violent strife between Communist and Nationalist factions, it was natural that he should come in for attacks from the Nationalist Press which showed no desire to refrain from lambasting an important State guest in exceedingly hostile terms. Mr. Mikoyan's final Press Conference at the airport was enlivened by a brush with the irrepressible opportunist Yunis al Thai, editor of *Al Thawra*, who attacked him on Soviet policy towards Palestine, exercising the licence which he enjoys from his known personal friendship with Qasim.

5. During the visit the quarrel between the two Iraqi Communist Parties continued. Mr. Mikoyan must surely have been careful to have no contacts with the real Iraqi Communist group which is in opposition to Qasim's official Communists. No suggestion has appeared that Mr. Mikoyan was interfering in Iraq's internal political affairs and he must have been at great pains to avoid the impression that he was in any way concerned, while doubtless seeking to efface the impression given to Qasim by the

support in the European Press (especially in the satellites) for the real against the official Communist Party. Nor has his visit as yet been followed by any sign of rapprochement between the two groups, though rumours of negotiations persist.

6. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hashim Jawad, told me that the visit was a bit of a shock to the Russians. He said that he thought that they had received incorrect reports from their Embassy about the Iraq Government's attitude. During the visit he had been able to make abundantly clear to Mr. Mikoyan what Iraq really meant by neutrality and independence. On the other hand, Muhammad Hadid, the Finance Minister, generally more cautious in his observations than Jawad, told me that he thought the visit had been a success. The official view given to the Western Missions by the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was that Mikoyan was not pleased, but this must be treated with some reserve since it reflects the strongly anti-Communist views of the Ministry. One significant pointer is that there was no final communiqué. The official explanation of this was that it was not an official visit and it is alleged that this view was pressed strongly by the Iraqi Foreign Minister. Nor was there any exchange of telegrams of good wishes published after Mr. Mikoyan had left. Western Missions in Baghdad therefore received the impression that Mr. Mikoyan had not left on a particularly cordial note and that his visit had not done very much to benefit relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union. My Pakistani colleague, whose Iraqi sources are good, has told me that Mr. Mikoyan stressed that the Soviet Government would be happy to see a neutral Iraq and that he urged that Iraq should get onto better terms with the United Arab Republic. The Pakistanis too had received the impression that the visit was not a success and that Mr. Mikoyan left in a somewhat angry mood. But we know little of what passed between Mr. Mikoyan and Qasim and I have no reason to suppose that Mr. Mikoyan did not succeed in what surely must have been his primary purpose, to convince Qasim that he could rely on the Soviet Government's friendship and support, however he handled his internal situation, provided he remained neutral and did not again submit to Western influence. That, after all, is more or less our line in reverse.

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I am copying this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Beirut, Bahrain, Cairo, Moscow, Ankara, Tehran, Washington, the Political Officer with the Middle East Forces and the United Kingdom Delegation to NATO. I enclose three copies of this despatch for distribution to Foreign Office Research Department, Information Research Department and the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

SOVIET INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION IN BAGHDAD

The first Soviet Industrial Exhibition in Iraq was opened on April 10 by the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, Anastas Mikoyan, in the presence of the Iraqi Prime Minister. The exhibition covers about three acres and three special buildings were erected. Two of these buildings are reasonably attractive structures in modern style with glass walls. One of these serves as the main exhibition hall and has in the entrance a many-times-life-size statue of Lenin together with models of the sputnik and lunik. This hall houses the machine tools and textile machinery, some industrial models and the exhibits of consumer goods. The second hall is in the nature of a hall of science. The third building is a very utilitarian affair which is used for cinema shows and whose condition becomes more and more squalid as the exhibition wears on.

2. The Russians seem to have tried to show something of everything in their exhibition. The machinery includes machine tools, textile machinery, drilling rigs, tractors, combine harvesters and other agricultural equipment and mechanical shovels. In addition there are a number of motor cars and lorries. The consumer goods include tinned foods, textiles, and jewellery and there is a section devoted to household equipment and radio and television sets. The hall of science is mainly given over to photographs and diagrams illustrating diseases which attack children and cattle and to models of nuclear power stations. The exhibition site also contains some stalls under the management of local agents for Soviet products, which appear to

be doing a brisk trade with cut-price razor blades, bottles of "Red Moscow" and "Kremlin" perfume, matches, cigarettes, books on Lenin, cheap crockery and flash light bulbs. There is also a commercial section where, presumably, Iraqi business men can get in touch with representatives of the Soviet export corporations.

3. The quality of the goods exhibited varies. As one would expect, the heavy machinery appears to be robustly made. The appearance of the consumer goods suffers from the familiar defects in Soviet taste. Despite this the radio and television sets look fairly presentable although the latter mostly have small screens. The household equipment would not attract a second glance if it were exhibited alongside similar articles of Western manufacture. The quality of the textiles chosen for the exhibition is thoroughly inferior—both in colour and design—being even worse than those shown at a similar exhibition put on by the Roumanians at the end of last year. The X-ray equipment looks well made and well finished. On the other hand the motor cars, motor-cycles and cycles suffer from old-fashioned styling, dowdy colours, and poor chromium work.

4. The exhibition is on an impressive scale but the general effect is very moderate. There are several reasons for this, one being the poor standard of industrial design mentioned above. Another is that insufficient care has been given to selection of exhibits. The Russians have tried to show too much and the exhibition is overcrowded. There is no clear separation between categories of exhibits. Some exhibits are not well adapted to the local market. For instance there is a model power station with an attendant handing out a brochure containing detailed specifications showing that it is to run on anthracite. Another example is the very large exhibition of furs which is excellent in its way but of only academic interest in Iraq. There are also large numbers of water pumps but almost all electrically powered whereas Iraq requires pumps driven by internal combustion engines.

5. Presentation is poor. The descriptive labels, which are in Russian and Arabic and sometimes also in English, are often too small to be easily read. A number of exhibits, e.g., samples of semi-finished products of non-ferrous metals and iron and steel are placed where they are difficult to study. The food store is dominated by

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a nondescript pile of tinned foods which look as if they were bought from a grocer's shop in liquidation and are all labelled unattractively in Russian. The machinery is not demonstrated enough. Nor have the Russians succeeded in keeping the exhibition clean against the dust of Baghdad and after two weeks everything looks rather shop-soiled.

6. The cost of entering the exhibition is 20 fils (about 5d.) and it has attracted very large crowds although attendance is now beginning to fall off. Large attendance does not, however, denote serious commercial interest as the inhabitants of Baghdad regard exhibitions as a cheap form of circus, and most of them wander around without looking twice at anything.

7. The exhibition is clearly designed to serve a political rather than a commercial end, although, for countries which are new to the Iraq market, like the Communist countries, trade exhibitions have more commercial justification than for countries like the United Kingdom which are already well established in this market. The Russian exhibition is the third in the Communist series having been preceded by Czech and Roumanian exhibitions at the end of last year. The Czech exhibition was good both from the point of view of the goods exhibited and presentation. The Roumanian exhibition was pathetic because there was so little to show. The Russian exhibition was clearly designed to eclipse its predecessors by sheer weight of effort, but it is much less well done than the Czech.

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No. 6

VISIT TO IRAQ OF Mr. F. J. ERROLL, MINISTER OF STATE AT THE BOARD OF TRADE, FROM APRIL 30-MAY 7, 1960

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received May 17)

SUMMARY

The Minister of State at the Board of Trade and Mrs. Erroll paid a visit to Iraq from the 30th of April to the 7th of May, visiting Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra. Mr. Erroll visited Iraqi Ministers and officials and discussed with the British business community their problems and prospects (paragraph 1).

2. The British business community was reasonably optimistic about the prospects of British business in Iraq. Difficulties are however being faced as a result of the new commercial agency and insurance Acts. The Iraqi Government have yet to meet the conditions necessary to encourage British contractors to take up major works in Iraq (paragraphs 2-3).

3. Mr. Erroll discussed with the Director-General of Railways the scheme for the conversion of the Baghdad-Basra line to standard gauge as a result of which a large amount of equipment is likely to be obtained in the next few years by international tender (paragraph 5).

4. Mr. Erroll's visit was a distinct success. The Iraq Prime Minister and other Ministers and officials were very pleased by it and the British community were gratified at the evidence of Her Majesty's Government's interest in their problems (paragraphs 6-7).

(No. 39. Restricted)
Sir,

*Baghdad,
May 10, 1960.*

Mr. F. J. Erroll, Minister of State at the Board of Trade, and Mrs. Erroll paid a visit to Iraq from the 30th of April to the 7th of May. They visited Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra. In Kirkuk they saw developments in the operations of the Iraq Petroleum Company and operations of British contractors such as the water injection scheme. The Basra visits included the power station designed and largely constructed by British firms and the operations of the Basra Petroleum Company, including the new deep-sea terminal off Fao. In all three places Mr. Erroll visited Iraqi Ministers and officials and was able to discuss with members of the British business community their problems and prospects. On social occasions Mr. and Mrs. Erroll met prominent members of the British community and their wives, and many Iraqis official and non-official, including those engaged in trade with the United Kingdom. In Baghdad Mr. Erroll called on the Prime Minister, the Minister of Commerce, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs (Acting

Minister of Finance), Planning, Works and Communications and had a meeting with the Director-General of Railways and his Director of Technical Projects. An interesting point which emerged from Mr. Erroll's interview with the Minister of Planning was the Minister's statement that the Development Plan would not be ready until the end of the financial year April 1960-March 1961 and that development would be founded on agriculture. The principal Minister concerned on the Iraqi side was the Minister of Commerce who clearly showed his interest in and appreciation of the visit. He met Mr. and Mrs. Erroll and saw them off at the airport, he gave an official reception for them and organised two meetings in which the principal officials of his Ministry and the officials in charge of the Government commercial undertakings took part. These meetings were businesslike, practical and very useful.

2. The British business community had a full opportunity to acquaint Mr. Erroll with their difficulties. He was able to take up with Iraqi Ministers the points which they raised, but the general impression

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ch he received was of a reasonable optimism about the prospects of British business in Iraq. As one British business put it: "No one is stopping us doing business". One very welcome sign of movement in conditions for British business men in the last year is the absence of any discrimination in the grant of import licences. There were no complaints on this score. Consulting engineers also have generally satisfactory relations with the Iraqi Government though their payments are not delayed. On the other hand, insurance companies have particular difficulties at the moment arising partly from the suspension of certain foreign companies over a year ago and partly out of the new law on insurance companies agents. Those in the least favourable position are the contractors, not from any discrimination against British interests but from the general economic conditions which have led to an increase of costs and lower productivity, to numerous administrative and labour difficulties and to the reluctance of Iraqi Government officials to recommend variation in the terms of old contracts where contractors have suffered heavy losses through no fault of their own as a result of conditions after the Revolution. The problem is to persuade the contractors to continue working in Iraq and to persuade the Iraqis that if they want to get the contractors back and to encourage competition in international tenders, they must show by an equitable settlement of old claims and by necessary alterations to the standard contract that contractors expect as fair a deal in Iraq as in the other countries in which they work.

Among the most important points in Mr. Erroll's discussions were the effect of the new commercial agency and insurance Acts. These Acts are in general intended to increase the share of Iraqis in commercial business in which hitherto foreign firms have had a large part. Mr. Erroll only mentioned the new agency law as a general way to the Minister of Commerce, since it was the consideration of British firms that it was better to press this issue. Messrs. African Eastern Limited (subsidiary of Shell) have already converted themselves into an Iraqi firm. Some other firms which are likely to have greater difficulties in their transformation have taken preliminary steps towards forming local companies, but they feel it is better to go no further at present and that in view of the present

lack of Iraqi capital, the execution of this law is likely to be at least considerably delayed. British insurance companies wishing to continue operations in Iraq will either have to form a branch or have as agents an Iraqi national or an Iraqi company with majority Iraqi financial participation. A more difficult problem which they face and which Mr. Erroll raised with the Minister of Commerce, is the provision by which the Minister may require investment in Iraq of a proportion of gross premium income, a provision which, as he pointed out, militates against the mobilisation of resources to meet claims which is essential to insurance companies operating on a world-wide basis. It is to be hoped that the Minister will exercise the discretion in the execution of this provision which is provided under the Act. At the time of Mr. Erroll's visit, however, this Act had only just been published and it has yet to be studied by the British insurance companies. It was clear from the statement of the acting head of the Iraqi National Insurance Company that so far as re-insurance is concerned the Iraqi experiment in doing without the London market for treaty business has not been a success and that the Iraqis are anxious to return at least to some extent to their old arrangements there.

4. The points raised by the Iraqis were naturally concerned with Iraqi exports and the new Iraqi Shipping Company. The consumption of Iraqi dates in the United Kingdom sharply decreased in the last year, but Mr. Erroll suggested that this might be only a temporary phase and welcomed the Iraqi Date Trading Company's proposal to establish an office in London. He dealt with other minor queries and complaints about the grading and recognition of Iraqi products and emphasised that the London market was free to all comers. It was, however, a highly competitive market and active steps were necessary to sell products in it in competition with other products from all over the world. As he said: "We welcome you to our Souk".

5. Of particular interest was the meeting with the Director-General of Railways and his Director of Technical Projects, a man having some training with the British Railways, who gave an able exposition of the plans for the conversion of the line from Baghdad to Basra to standard gauge. It was clear from this discussion that the Iraqi Railways would be ordering in the next few years large quantities of equipment in

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*Baghdad,
May 10, 1960.*

Mr. F. J. Erroll, Minister of State at the Board of Trade, and Mrs. Erroll paid a visit to Iraq from the 30th of April to the 7th of May. They visited Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra. In Kirkuk they saw developments in the operations of the Iraq Petroleum Company and operations of British contractors such as the water injection scheme. The Basra visits included the power station designed and largely constructed by British firms and the operations of the Basra Petroleum Company, including the new deep-sea terminal off Fao. In all three places Mr. Erroll visited Iraqi Ministers and officials and was able to discuss with members of the British business community their problems and prospects. On social occasions Mr. and Mrs. Erroll met prominent members of the British community and their wives, and many Iraqis official and non-official, including those engaged in trade with the United Kingdom. In Baghdad Mr. Erroll called on the Prime Minister, the Minister of Commerce, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs (Acting

Minister of Finance), Planning, Works and Communications and had a meeting with the Director-General of Railways and Director of Technical Projects. An interesting point which emerged from Mr. Erroll's interview with the Minister of Planning was the Minister's statement that the Development Plan would not be revised until the end of the financial year April 1960-March 1961 and that development would be founded on agriculture. The principal Minister concerned on the Iraqi side was the Minister of Commerce who clearly showed his interest in appreciation of the visit. He met Mr. Erroll and saw them off at the airport. He gave an official reception for them and organised two meetings in which principal officials of his Ministry and officials in charge of the Government's commercial undertakings took part. These meetings were businesslike, practical and very useful.

2. The British business community had a full opportunity to acquaint Mr. Erroll with their difficulties. He was able to discuss with Iraqi Ministers the points which they raised, but the general impression

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which he received was of a reasonable optimism about the prospects of British business in Iraq. As one British business man put it: "No one is stopping us doing business". One very welcome sign of improvement in conditions for British business men in the last year is the absence of any discrimination in the grant of import licences. There were no complaints on this score. Consulting engineers also have generally satisfactory relations with the Iraqi Government though their payments are often delayed. On the other hand, insurance companies have particular difficulties at the moment arising partly out of the suspension of certain foreign companies over a year ago and partly out of the new law on insurance companies and agents. Those in the least favourable position are the contractors, not from any discrimination against British interests but from the general economic conditions which have led to an increase of costs and lower productivity, to numerous administrative and labour difficulties and to the reluctance of Iraqi Government officials to recommend variation in the terms of old contracts where contractors have suffered heavy losses through no fault of their own as a result of conditions after the Revolution. The problem is to persuade the contractors to continue working in Iraq and to persuade the Iraqis that if they want to get the contractors back and to encourage competition in international tenders, they must show by an equitable settlement of the old claims and by necessary alterations in the standard contract that contractors can expect as fair a deal in Iraq as in the other countries in which they work.

3. Among the most important points in Mr. Erroll's discussions were the effect of the new commercial agency and insurance Acts. These Acts are in general intended to increase the share of Iraqis in commercial business in which hitherto foreign firms have had a large part. Mr. Erroll only mentioned the new agency law in a general way to the Minister of Commerce, since it was the considered opinion of British firms that it was better not to press this issue. Messrs. African and Eastern Limited (subsidiary of Unilever) have already converted themselves into an Iraqi firm. Some other firms which are likely to have greater difficulties in this transformation have taken preliminary steps towards forming local companies, but feel it is better to go no further at present and that in view of the present

lack of Iraqi capital, the execution of this law is likely to be at least considerably delayed. British insurance companies wishing to continue operations in Iraq will either have to form a branch or have as agents an Iraqi national or an Iraqi company with majority Iraqi financial participation. A more difficult problem which they face and which Mr. Erroll raised with the Minister of Commerce, is the provision by which the Minister may require investment in Iraq of a proportion of gross premium income, a provision which, as he pointed out, militates against the mobilisation of resources to meet claims which is essential to insurance companies operating on a world-wide basis. It is to be hoped that the Minister will exercise the discretion in the execution of this provision which is provided under the Act. At the time of Mr. Erroll's visit, however, this Act had only just been published and it has yet to be studied by the British insurance companies. It was clear from the statement of the acting head of the Iraqi National Insurance Company that so far as re-insurance is concerned the Iraqi experiment in doing without the London market for treaty business has not been a success and that the Iraqis are anxious to return at least to some extent to their old arrangements there.

4. The points raised by the Iraqis were naturally concerned with Iraqi exports and the new Iraqi Shipping Company. The consumption of Iraqi dates in the United Kingdom sharply decreased in the last year, but Mr. Erroll suggested that this might be only a temporary phase and welcomed the Iraqi Date Trading Company's proposal to establish an office in London. He dealt with other minor queries and complaints about the grading and recognition of Iraqi products and emphasised that the London market was free to all comers. It was, however, a highly competitive market and active steps were necessary to sell products in it in competition with other products from all over the world. As he said: "We welcome you to our Souk".

5. Of particular interest was the meeting with the Director-General of Railways and his Director of Technical Projects, a man having some training with the British Railways, who gave an able exposition of the plans for the conversion of the line from Baghdad to Basra to standard gauge. It was clear from this discussion that the Iraqi Railways would be ordering in the next few years large quantities of equipment in

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connexion with this scheme, and it was welcome news to have confirmation that, subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers, the Iraqi Railways intended to procure all these requirements through international tender. There was a danger at one time that some of these supplies would be drawn exclusively from Russia under the Soviet aid agreement. Mr. Erroll invited the Director-General of Railways to visit British Railways with some members of his senior staff in order to see the recent developments under the present expansion scheme and promised that British firms would be able to quote competitive prices for the locomotives, rolling stock, signalling and other equipment which the Iraqis would require. The conversation covered also the requirements of Iraqi Airways. It had been hoped that the Vanguard would arrive on a demonstration flight during Mr. Erroll's visit. It was, however, delayed, but a successful demonstration was given after he had left for Basra.

6. Mr. Erroll's conversation with the Prime Minister was of necessity on general lines. He explained that the purpose of his visit was to increase British trading opportunities on a basis of equality and mutual benefit and emphasised how both the British Government and British business men fully recognised the nationalist aspirations and needs of the developing territories, including those which were now receiving indepen-

dence at the hands of the United Kingdom Government. The Prime Minister was clearly pleased by this conversation and the Minister of Commerce told me afterwards that the Prime Minister regarded the visit as a success. The same opinion was expressed by officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It was well and favourably covered by the local Press.

7. I am most grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Erroll for the trouble they took over this visit which will undoubtedly be of political and economic advantage to British interests. The British community were most gratified by the indication that Her Majesty's Government were anxious to understand and help them in their problems which had been of such difficulty since the Revolution. It was encouraging to find that the situation had changed for the better since the visit of Sir Frank Lee a year ago. There is clear recognition on the Iraqi side that British firms have a contribution to make to the Iraqi economy. Difficulties continue, but the horizon is somewhat brighter.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Export Credits Guarantee Department and to the Commercial Relations and Exports Department of the Board of Trade, to Her Majesty's Treasury and to the Consulate-General at Basra.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

EQ 1015/61

No. 7

THE POLITICAL SCENE IN IRAQ

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received June 20)

SUMMARY

The struggle for power in Iraq continues; there is tension between the communities. Official leadership is confused and obscure (paragraph 1).

2. The Communists have lost power but could again become a serious danger. New nationalist groups are being organised (paragraph 2).

3. After the split in the National Democratic Party it seems unlikely that any significant political force can in the near future be built up in the centre independent of the nationalists (paragraph 3).

4. Qasim, though apparently opposed to the extremists on either side, shows no signs of adopting a clear political position or of establishing his own party. He maintains his policy of balance (paragraph 4).

5. Qasim has lost the greater part of the support which he had after the Revolution, but many people are willing to see him continue for the present both from fear of the danger of another *coup* and in the light of the general improvement in the non-Communist position. They have, however, no confidence in Qasim and deplore the inefficiency of the Government. He keeps the Ba'athist plotters under sentence of death as hostages and is therefore inhibited from executing the Communists condemned to death for murder (paragraph 5).

6. The general political climate is better and there is a reasonable prospect that the moderates may in time defeat the extremists (paragraph 6).

7. The Western position has improved and trade and cultural relations with the West continue at a satisfactory level, although Qasim's suspicions against the West have apparently not been removed (paragraph 7).

8. The British are still believed by many otherwise intelligent people to be responsible for plots on both sides and even for the 1958 Revolution (paragraph 8).

(No. 47. Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
June 13, 1960.

After nearly two years since the Revolution, power in Iraq does not yet lie securely in anyone's hands. Stability is not yet in sight and the struggle between the green and the red factions continues. The children play at "nationalists and Communists" in the streets instead of "cops and robbers", the Press, surprisingly free, attacks and counter-attacks without restraint, and the surface peace is punctuated by recurring communal murder. Respectable families in the nationalist quarters of Baghdad have their arms ready against a bad day. Each faction has its own strongholds in the towns

and in the liwas. In Mosul, where people tend to keep off the streets after dark, Cairo Radio blares loudly in the cafés and the young habitués freely exhibit their Ba'ath party cards. In Ramadi to the west the raised fore-finger, the nationalists' sign of Arab unity, is seen frequently and the traveller is wise to give the same sign in reply. In Baghdad the Communists can still produce large crowds of sympathisers to celebrate a Conference of Peace Partisans or to welcome Mr. Mikoyan. Recent discoveries by the police, would, on the face of them, indicate that they have their plans for offensive action in certain contingencies. Official leadership is confused and obscure.

Qasim, in a public speech to the local governors, commends to them the Communist front organisations as serving the people, but the same governors, presumably under Qasim's orders, close down at the same time all branches of these organisations except those at the district headquarters, and, over large areas in the south, prevent the distribution of the main Communist newspaper. The efforts made by the Commander of the First Division in the south to stop Communist propaganda in the guise of an anti-illiteracy campaign, are over-ruled from Baghdad. The powerful priests of Nejef and Kerbala issue religious decrees against the Communists and are rebuked by Qasim for interfering in politics. But Qasim at the same time uses the occasion of the Id Festival to stress the essentially Islamic character of the State.

2. The Communists have lost power and influence as a result of their own excesses, but they remain the best organised party; they still permeate a number of Ministries and, should circumstances favour them, they could again become a serious danger. They remain strong in Baghdad and in some other southern cities, but have much less influence in the countryside, except in parts of Kurdistan where they seem to be strong. Qasim's captive Communist Party led by Daoud al Sayigh, which has received the official licence, has not succeeded in acquiring any significant membership. Qasim's manoeuvre to bring the Communist Party under control appears therefore to have so far failed and has probably only served to consolidate it. The nationalists are now more confident and a number of new nationalist groups are being organised and are in touch with each other. The strongest of these groups is still the Ba'athists, now underground but well organised and by no means a negligible factor in Iraqi politics. But the majority of the nationalists, though respecting Gamal Abdul Nasser as the greatest Arab leader, are probably advocates of an independent Iraq. Apart from the Directors of Education, the district officials and the police are generally anti-Communist and favour the nationalists in faction quarrels. The Court of Cassation, the highest court, has twice shown its independence by reversing Qasim's orders in relation to political parties and is generally nationalist in complexion. Qasim apparently does not feel himself strong enough to pack it or reduce its power, which is in any case severely limited by the operation of martial law and the military courts.

3. The Centre has been seriously weakened by the split in the National Democratic Party. Muhammad Hadid, until lately Finance Minister since the Revolution, the advocate of co-operation with Qasim, is to form a new party and will almost certainly re-enter the Government. He can probably count on the support of the capitalists who will look to him to protect their interests and is already making efforts to wean supporters away from the opposing section under Kamil Chaderchi, which will retain the original party name. We are told that Kamil Chaderchi has tried to form a link with some of the nationalist groups, but that they have rejected his overtures since they do not trust his apparent willingness to work with the Communists. As a result of the National Democrats' split, it now seems even less likely than before that any significant political force can in the near future be built up in the Centre independent of the nationalists. The Kurdish Party appears to be of little moment. Mulla Mustapha Barzani, who leads it, is dependent on Qasim for financial support, and it seems probable that he and his political associates have no significant following among the main Kurdish tribes, who are more concerned with their tribal feuds and interests than with Iraqi politics in general.

4. Qasim maintains his position of being "above parties"; that is, he seeks to split or otherwise to reduce the power of any party or faction which threatens his position. Although probably genuinely opposed to either extreme, he shows no signs of adopting a clear political position nor of trying to acquire support through the establishment of his own party. He is not likely to rely much even on Muhammad Hadid's new party, despite its main plank being co-operation with him. He shows no sign of coming right out against the Communists and while reducing their power in the districts and in the trade unions, would probably not be averse to a reconciliation between them and the official Communists on his own terms which would give him a more secure support on the Left. There are signs of his balancing tricks even in the Armed Forces. In Mosul the anti-Communist governor is balanced by the Communist Garrison Commander. In the East, the Communist who was responsible for torturing the nationalists after the Mosul Revolt commands a brigade under the opportunist but non-Communist Divisional Commander. Three Communist Squadron Commanders in the air force are displaced,

while the Communist Commander is retained. The notorious Colonel Mahdawi remains apparently close to him and ready for use against new plotters, while Qasim publicly endorses the nationalist courts which are still trying Communists for the brutal murders at Kirkuk and Mosul, though making it clear that their decisions are subject to his orders.

5. Qasim seems to have lost the greater part of the support which he had after the Revolution. The Communists do not trust him, but continue to support him up to a point as the best Prime Minister for which they can at present hope. The nationalists profess to have given him up for good, although it would be unwise to label any political attitude in Iraq as irrevocable. The populace appears to be relatively apathetic towards him. But a large number of Iraqis, educated and uneducated, who want peace, fear that another *coup* would only mean new dangers for them and their families and accept Qasim for the moment as being the least uncertain prospect, and the general improvement in the non-Communists' position and morale, whether due to his actions or not, works in his favour. A senior army officer has divided army officers into nationalists, the large majority, Communists, now losing strength, opportunists, who will desert Qasim if he fails, and the Qasimites who in most cases owe their jobs to him and would lose them if he lost power. The moderate nationalists among them, according to one source, are pleased to see Qasim at odds with the political parties and are waiting to see how the situation develops between him and the politicians. They would probably like to see the political experiment break down and the country run by a dictator resting himself principally on the support of the army. But whatever their political persuasion, most people doubt whether Qasim can ever run the country efficiently. He does not inspire confidence; his manoeuvring between the parties has kept him precariously afloat, but the Administration is demonstrably less efficient than before the Revolution; the economy of the country, although shored-up by the oil revenues, has manifestly gone back during the last two years; the State expenditure has increased by one-third with very little to show for it and, with one or two exceptions, the Ministers appear to be incapable of running their departments and unable to exercise any serious responsibility. Most people would say that the one sensible action taken

by the revolutionary régime was land reform, which is in principle generally popular among the peasants. But the chaos in the countryside during the first year of the republican régime and the incompetence of the land reform administration have got it into a mess from which it will only be extricated with difficulty over a long period. Those whose relations or friends have suffered death, torture or imprisonment must hate Qasim, but more seem to regard him with indifference, some as a bit of a joke, if a rather dangerous one. As we know from his own statement, he still feels that he dare not leave Baghdad; he still spends most of his time in the Ministry of Defence and never goes out except in his bullet-proof car, generally with armed escort. He keeps Rashid Ali Gailani and Abdul Salam Arif still under sentence of death as a weapon against the nationalists. His decision at the last moment to refrain from executing the Ba'athists who were responsible for the attempt on his life in October 1959 was generally welcomed, but at the same time regarded as a sign of weakness. He has now almost openly declared that he is keeping them under sentence of death as hostages against another attempt by the party on his life. By not executing them, however, he has got himself into something of a dilemma, since he will find it difficult now to execute the Communists who have been condemned by the Martial Courts for murdering their political opponents, often in circumstances of appalling brutality. Nasser appears at the moment to be laying off Iraq and not to be actively promoting any plots. The general impression is that there is no great sense of urgency among Qasim's opponents. A well-known politician in conversation with me recently gave him another year and a prominent member of the old régime has said that he hoped that he would last another year because by that time the régime would be finally and irrevocably discredited. So he may stay in power at least for some time yet, since with the help of the Iraq Petroleum Company the country can stand a long period of inefficiency without really serious consequences. But no month passes without predictions of the date of the next plot from one side or the other and it would be foolish to prophesy.

6. The strength or weakness of Qasim's position is by no means an indication of the general political climate. In spite of the continued instability, the tension between the

factions, the increasing unemployment and the general stagnation of the economy, conditions have greatly improved in the last year. Twelve months ago after the Mosul Revolt, the country was near anarchy, Communist influence threatened to permeate the whole life of the country and it was only the excesses of the Communists, threatening Qasim's position, which turned him against them and prevented them from obtaining a dominating influence from which they could only have been with great difficulty dislodged. Now whatever the uncertainties of the immediate future, the position of the non-Communists is much stronger and there is a reasonable prospect that in the end the moderates, with or without Qasim, will defeat the extremists on either side.

7. In the last year the Western position has also substantially improved. The Russian paradise has been found on inspection to be by no means all flowing with milk and honey, and neutralism, if still biased to the Left, is no longer equivalent to the removal of all Western influence. Western trade and cultural connexions continue at a satisfactory level. Although Russian military and economic aid is by no means negligible and is a factor which will have to be permanently reckoned with, the Iraqis still look principally to the West for technical education, medical treatment, relaxation and the supply of large varieties of consumer and capital goods. The British position has been adjusted to the new circumstances and the educated Iraqi is now much more friendly to the British. Qasim himself still fills his speeches with warnings against "the imperialists and the greedy" and remains, understandably enough, full of fears of further plots against him. "Imperialism" he said in a recent speech, "has plotted against us, plotted against myself in person and continues to plot". Although the Minister for Foreign Affairs naturally enough suggests to me that these warnings are directed only against the U.A.R., most people interpret them as including at least to some degree the Iranians, the Americans and ourselves. Qasim's suspicions against the West are probably by no means removed and it is natural for him to believe that his difficulties and the continued instability of the country must be the work of foreign agitation among a population which would otherwise be wholly united in support of him. It has been of great advantage that one country bound by alliances to the West, Turkey, has

been genuinely regarded in Iraq as a sincere friend and it is of importance to us in Iraq, too, that the new régime in Turkey should maintain its former external policy. We and the Americans have naturally been through difficult times since the Revolution, but it is a far cry from the time when Mr. Rowntree was received with a dangerous and hostile demonstration, when members of this Embassy were closely followed by the C.I.D. and when we had to contend with hostility or fear in all the Iraqi departments. It is no longer dangerous to co-operate with us and although Qasim has recently delivered a violent warning against Iraqi association with foreign Embassies engaged in subversive activities, it is only the Embassy of the U.A.R. which is still a social pariah. A year ago hardly any Iraqis would visit us except officials with a good official excuse: now Qasim's vague warnings, though believed to apply to us among others, are treated with scant respect. Iraqis visit us freely and we are again invited to their houses.

8. There is a well-known Arabic saying which I have had occasion to quote to Qasim, that if there are two fish fighting in the sea, the British are behind it. Moreover, Arabs, as one Iraqi put it, are apt to believe things which they know not to be true. But it is still surprising to hear for what we are believed to be responsible. We have been accused by Colonel Mahdawi of plotting with the U.A.R. against Iraq, of trying to subvert the army and of plotting with the brother of the executed Colonel Sirri to overthrow Qasim. On the other side, we are similarly believed by many nationalists to be supporting Qasim because of our hatred of Arab nationalism and Nasser and even to have been behind the Communist excesses in Mosul and Kirkuk. Most surprising of all we are believed by a number of intelligent and educated Iraqis to have been responsible for the 1958 Revolution. Realising that Nuri was no longer any use to us, we selected Qasim as our new instrument of policy. Although our policy is clear and we take great trouble to expound it, we must reconcile ourselves to the persistence for some time longer of these absurd beliefs and half-beliefs. Fortunately, it does not seem to matter very much; it is regarded as part of the natural order of things and is not likely seriously to affect our normal relations with either the present Government or with whatever non-Communist Government may come to power after it.

I am sending a copy of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Washington, Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Ankara, Tehran, Karachi, Bahrain, Kuwait, the Political Office with the Middle East Forces, the Headquarters, British Forces in the Aden Protectorate, the United Kingdom

Delegate to NATO, the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and Her Majesty's Consul-General in Basra.

I have, &c.

HUMPHREY TREVELYAN.

EQ 1015/112

No. 8

THE POLITICAL SCENE IN IRAQ

Mr. Falle to Lord Home. (Received October 3)

SUMMARY

Tension in Iraq reached a high point before the July 14 celebrations. There was relief that the celebrations did not lead to loss of life and there was consequently a slight lessening of surface tension, although all the basic elements for unrest remained (paragraphs 1-3).

2. There have been universal complaints about the deterioration in economic conditions, but in spite of this the economy can continue to function indefinitely, as long as the oil revenues are received (paragraph 4).

3. Criticism of Qasim has continued to increase. He has shown a certain partiality for the Left and has taken no strong action against the Communists. He has tended to rely on them because they have stood by him, while others have reviled him or plotted against him. The Communists still consider Qasim the best Prime Minister available, although they are not entirely satisfied with him (paragraphs 5 and 8).

4. Qasim has decided that the projected Baghdad-Basra railway will be built by the Russians and it seems probable that he will also obtain locomotives and rolling stock from them without going out to tender. A further influx of Soviet experts can be expected, particularly in connexion with the Iraqi-Soviet Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement (paragraph 6).

5. Government action is still being taken against the Communists by the administrative and security authorities. Government influence in the trade union elections is directed towards ensuring the success of the anti-Communists (paragraph 7).

6. There has been no improvement in the efficiency of the Government. Qasim tries to run the show on his own and is incapable of doing so. He is probably unaware of the general discontent in the country and thinks that any opposition to him is stirred up by the imperialists (paragraphs 9 and 14).

7. The Opposition have not so far proved effective and are not yet sufficiently united to bring down the régime, although there is always a chance of a successful assassination attempt (paragraphs 10, 11 and 14).

8. The situation in Kurdistan is steadily deteriorating although it has not yet reached the point of serious unrest (paragraph 12).

9. There have been rumours of a Cabinet reshuffle throughout the summer but in the event nothing has happened (paragraph 13).

(No. 70. Confidential) *Baghdad,*
My Lord, *September 27, 1960.*

As the long hot summer is drawing to a close it may be useful if I attempt to review the developments in the political scene since Sir Humphrey Trevelyan's despatch No. 47 of June 13. All the important events have

already been reported and I do not intend to go into detail in this despatch but merely to try and give a general impression and draw some conclusions.

2. In the middle of June Iraqis were talking with apprehension of the season of

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the aubergine, that is the hottest part of the summer, in which the passions of the basically savage Iraqi people tend to boil over. The season of the aubergine coincides with the anniversary of the revolution and these considerations led to a feeling of apprehension and tension which increased up until July 14.

3. In the event, the celebrations passed off peacefully, apart from one or two minor incidents and there was a temporary feeling of relief that a point of danger had been passed without disaster. This did not mean any abatement in the basic tensions: the hatred, particularly between Communists and anti-Communists, the desire for vengeance, the feeling of blood-feud still remained, as did the almost universal dissatisfaction with the way the country was being administered. There were underlying rumours of plots, but nothing very concrete, and all the time Iraqis continued to say that the situation could not continue indefinitely. Iraq was likened to a powder-keg with the fuse ready for lighting but no one had yet appeared to light the fuse. Everybody was waiting for him. At the same time it could be said that tension was lessening slightly, simply because people were becoming used to it. They had been expecting a blow-up for so long that they came to worry about it rather less; life seemed to go on more or less normally. Although much play was made with the clashes between Communists and anti-Communists and particularly the revenge killings of the Communists by anti-Communists, the number of lives lost was relatively small. There was not a really serious danger of a knock on the door in the middle of the night and of householders being taken out and shot, although Iraqis tried to make out that such a danger did exist.

4. There was perpetual complaint about the bad economic conditions, failure of the harvest, the necessity to import cereals, unemployment and shortage of money. In spite of this trade was going on, some people were making money and, although there was probably a slow deterioration in the general living conditions of the Iraqi people, it is doubtful whether this has yet reached danger point. As long as Iraq is receiving large oil revenues, the economy can hobble along indefinitely without collapse.

5. Criticism of Qasim has been on the increase throughout the summer. It is difficult to find anyone who is prepared to

support him whole-heartedly, although the Communists, without doubt, still consider him the best Prime Minister available (see paragraph 8 below). Furthermore, his recent conduct has tended to give a certain encouragement to the Communists. He has allowed the republication of the Communist newspaper *Saut al Ahrar*, which was banned, and has suppressed two Nationalist newspapers. The process of commuting the sentences of the Communists condemned by the Martial Courts continues. None of the Communists condemned to death for the brutal murders which took place last year have been executed nor does it appear that they are likely to be. Qasim attends gatherings of Communist front organisations or fellow-travelling groups, thereby showing his support for them and makes his monotonous, repetitive speeches condemning the imperialists and the greedy and hardly ever says an unkind word about the Left, except in occasional references to extremism. He failed to attend in person the celebrations on the occasion of the Prophet's Birthday, which were of an essentially religious and nationalist character. He is allowing the International Union of Students, a Communist front organisation, to hold a meeting in Baghdad in October and presumably hopes to use the occasion for the greater glorification of himself and the Revolution.

6. On the economic side, Qasim has unequivocally decided that the new Baghdad-Basra railway will be built by the Russians and at the moment it seems probable that he will also obtain rolling stock and locomotives from the Russians. He recently said this to the Director-General of Railways, who was trying to interest him in the purchase of American locomotives. It also appears likely that the main purpose of the recent visit by the Iraqi Army officers to the Soviet Union was to examine the purchase of further Russian military equipment. We can expect an influx of more Russian experts, both in the military and civilian fields, the civilians in connexion with the Iraqi-Soviet Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement. Our Chancery letter No. 1161/30/60 S. of September 27, gives details of this.

7. As some counter-balance to this sympathy towards the Communists, the administrative authorities of the Ministry of the Interior still show a bias against the Communists. Reports from the liwas indicate that the police are usually on the side of the anti-Communists when there are

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disturbances and there is a steady anti-Communist Government-inspired movement in the trade unions. The anti-Communists are now winning most of this year's trade union elections and when they fail to do so, elections are often declared invalid and re-held so that the "correct" result may be obtained. At the same time the anti-Communist Press is allowed to continue to publish strong articles attacking Communism and a vigorous campaign by *Al Hurriyah* against the International Union of Students meeting has not so far provoked any official reaction. The recent education conference, on which we have reported by Chancery letter, indicates some slight improvement in the Ministry of Education but not nearly as radical as was hoped for by the anti-Communists when Brigadier Isma'il Arif took office last May.

8. None of the above is inconsistent with our previous experience of Qasim. He has always shown himself to be more at home with the Communists and fellow-travellers than with the anti-Communists. He regards the anti-Communists as his enemies, with some justification, since all movements against him and attempts to kill him, that have been publicised, have come from that side. There have, from time to time, been reports of Communist plots particularly at the time of Kirkuk in July 1959. There is, however, no firm evidence that the aim of these plots was to take over power or subvert the régime, although they were presumably intended to increase Communist power and influence in the country. There has also almost certainly been Communist contingency planning to prepare for a sudden swing Right by Qasim or a take-over by the anti-Communists. Our information points to the fact that although the Communists are irritated with Qasim and the actions he has taken against them they want him to remain, at least in the foreseeable future; they fear that any possible alternative Prime Minister would repress them brutally. Qasim's anti-Communist actions are partly explained by the fact that he intends to maintain ultimate control in his own hands and does not wish the Communists to obtain too much power. He also wishes to give a practical demonstration of his declared policy of being above trends and inclinations, although everything points to his inclinations being towards the Left. The Communists have protected and glorified him since the Revolution, while since the beginning of 1959 many other Iraqis have reviled him or plotted against

him. Therefore he has relied on the Communists, not because he is one of them, but because they have stood by him.

9. There has been no sign of any improvement in the efficiency of the Government over the summer. Qasim appears to be the sole arbiter and to have neither the wish nor the ability to decentralise. Decentralisation only occurs in fact in the provinces, where the Governors are out of close touch with Baghdad and able to follow their own inclinations to some extent, since Qasim does not give them direct orders. Qasim is surrounded by sycophants who are terrified of him and never tell him unpleasant truths about feeling in the country. He therefore continues to believe that he is loved and supported by his people and it is only the imperialists and the sick souls who are opposed to him. He also thinks that he was sent by Allah to save his country.

10. The first overt indication of anti-Qasim feeling for some time was given on September 20, the anniversary of the execution of Brigadier Nadhim al Tabaqchali. On this occasion there were demonstrations in the nationalist quarters of Baghdad and the demonstrators made a pilgrimage to Tabaqchali's house. The demonstrations were orderly, and the Army, which was out in force, watched them but did not attempt to interfere. Reports of slogans that were shouted, or perhaps merely murmured, indicate that these were breathing death to Qasim. We have heard that as a result of these demonstrations some 50 people have been arrested, although it is difficult to obtain accurate figures.

11. The Opposition claim that their various groups are moving towards the formation of a semi-clandestine united political opposition. They are printing pamphlets, criticising the régime in strong terms, which are clandestinely and widely circulated in Baghdad. The Opposition are, however, the first to admit that this sort of activity by itself is insufficient to bring down the régime and that the apparatus of military dictatorship, however unpopular, is difficult to destroy. There is little doubt that the political opposition are in touch with army groups, who in their turn have to proceed with extreme caution. Qasim's intelligence service continues to be effective and the planning of a conspiracy remains a most hazardous operation. A further important factor is that there is a strong streak in the Iraqi character which prefers

to follow the line of least resistance. Thus many Iraqis are prepared to criticise Qasim furiously behind his back, but, if they come anywhere near him, wriggle on their bellies in abject humility and obsequiousness. Such people would not be prepared to risk themselves in any way, however much they may dislike Qasim and the régime.

12. From information that we have received in the past few months it seems certain that the situation in Kurdistan continues to deteriorate. Inter-tribal strife is growing, to a large extent encouraged by Qasim's random gifts of arms to mutually hostile tribes. The past two harvests have been poor and economic conditions have grown worse *pari passu* with the rest of Iraq. The authority of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, until recently regarded as spokesman for all the Kurds, has declined both within the Kurdish Democratic Party of which he is the leader, and among the tribes; moreover Mulla Mustafa himself is discontented with his treatment by Qasim and disillusioned with the concept of Arab-Kurdish fraternity within Iraq. (He showed his disapproval by not attending the July 14 celebrations.) Finally, throughout Kurdistan there is widespread feeling that the promises of the Revolution towards Kurdistan have not been fulfilled and that in development, internal administration and education Kurdish interests have been ignored. In short, the position in Kurdistan has generally become worse throughout the summer, although it has not yet reached the point of serious civil unrest or a renewed wish for secession.

13. Throughout the summer there have been rumours of impending Cabinet changes. Muhammad Hadid has been continuously expected to return to the Cabinet either as Deputy Prime Minister or as Minister of Finance or both together. In fact, nothing has happened. Some say that Iraqis who are eligible for Cabinet posts

do not wish to commit themselves by joining an unpopular régime at this stage. On the other hand, it may be that Qasim is not very interested in improving his Cabinet, since its members have little or no say in the Government in any case. Hadid still appears with Qasim on official occasions and it seems likely that he remains his most important civilian adviser on technical matters. It is most unlikely that Hadid dares to advise Qasim on general policy and his reputation now is that he is degradingly subservient.

14. My conclusion from the above is that there has been no fundamental change since June, but only a general deterioration. The Iraq Government is unpopular and incompetent and subject to the will of one man, who does not understand the problems of administration, and whose principal aim is maintaining himself in power and glorifying himself, with the interests of the country subordinate to this aim. The general internal and external policy of Qasim is more sympathetic to the Communists than their opponents, although he attempts to preserve some show of neutrality. In spite of his unpopularity the régime may last for some time, although the chance of a successful assassination plot is ever present.

15. I am sending a copy of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Washington, Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Ankara, Tehran, Karachi, Bahrain, Kuwait, the Political Office, Middle East Forces, the Headquarters, British Forces in the Aden Protectorate, the United Kingdom Delegate to NATO, the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Her Majesty's Consul-General in Basra.

I have, &c.

S. FALLE
(*Chargé d'Affaires*).